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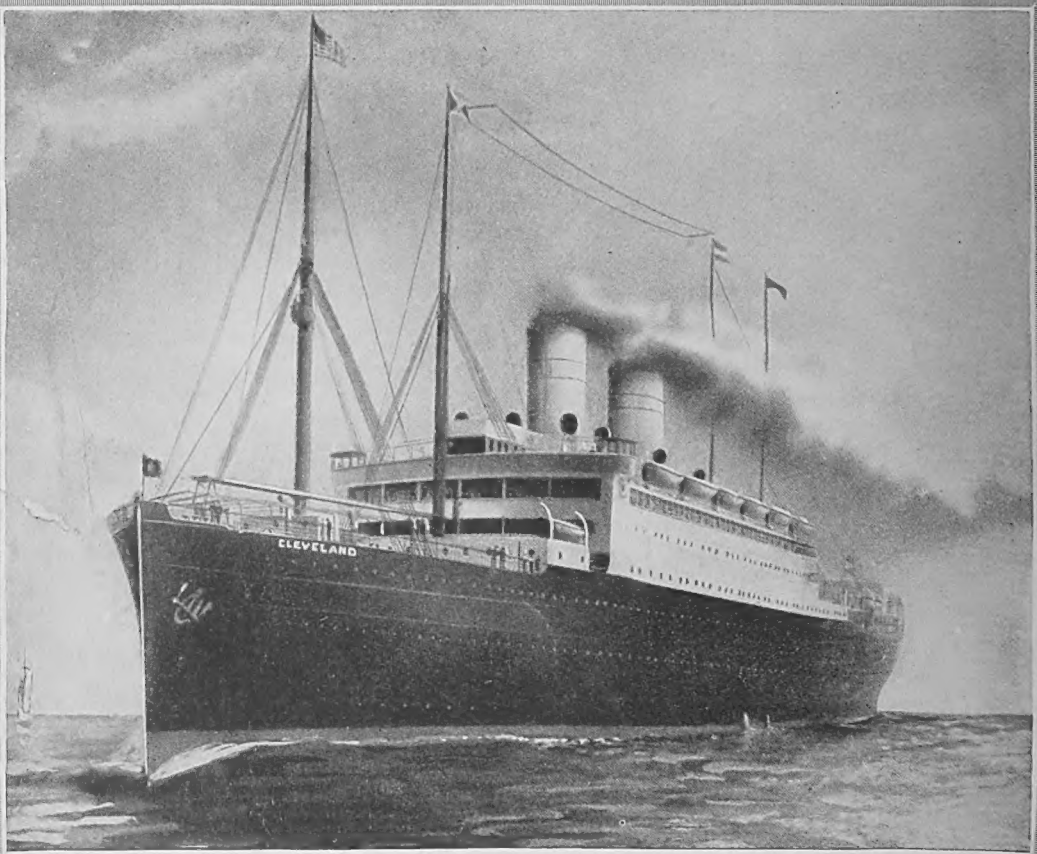

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RIGHT down here in this little spot of type we want to pass you a quiet tip to be on a special lookout for the next issue—October. We can't prove to you *in advance* that there are *at least* six stories in October that you will like clear down to the ground, but we can give you fair warning. Out September 3d. See page 224. That's all.

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Adventure

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SEPT 1914 Vol. 8 No. 5

THE SNOW-BURNER

By Henry Oyen

CHAPTER I

"HELP!"

THE brisk November sunrise, breaking over the dark jack-pines, lighted up the dozen snow-covered frame buildings comprising the so-called town of Rail Head, and presently reached in through the uncurtained windows of the Northern Light saloon where it shone upon the curly head of young Toppy Treplin as, pillowed on his crossed forearms, it lay in repose on one of the saloon tables.

It was a sad, strange place to find Toppy Treplin, one-time All-American halfback, but for the last four years all-around money-eyed loafer and waster. Rail Head was far from the beaten path. It lay at the end of sixty miles of narrow-gage track that rambled westward into the Big Woods from the Iron Range Railroad line, and it consisted mainly of a box-car depot, an alleged hotel and six saloons—none of the latter being in any too good repute with the better element round about.

The existence of the saloons might have explained Toppy's presence in Rail Head had their character and wares been of a nature to attract one of his critical tastes; but in reality Toppy was there because the Iron Range Limited, bearing Harvey Duncombe's private hunting-car, had stopped for a moment the night before out where the narrow-gage met the Iron Range Railroad tracks.

Toppy, at that fated moment, was out on the observation platform alone. There had been a row and Toppy had rushed out in a black rage. Within, the car reeked with the mingled odors of cigarette-smoke and spilled champagne. Out of doors the first snowfall of the season, faintly tinted by a newly risen moon, lay unmarked, undefiled.

A girl—small, young, brisk and business-like—alighted from the car ahead and walked swiftly across the station platform to the narrow-gage train that stood waiting. The anger and champagne raging in him had moved Toppy to one of those wild pranks which had made his name among his fellows synonymous with irresponsibility.

He would get away from it all, away

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from Harvey Duncombe and his champagne, and all that sort of thing. He would show them!

Toppy had stepped off. The Limited suddenly glided away. Toppy lurched over to the narrow-gage, and that was the last thing he had remembered of that memorable night.

As the sun now revealed him, Mr. Robert Lovejoy Treplin, in spite of his deplorable condition, was a figure to win attention of a not entirely unfavorable sort. Still clad in mackinaw and hunting-clothes, his two hundred pounds of bone and muscle and just a little too much fat were sprawled picturesquely over the chair and table, the six-foot gracefulness of him being obvious despite his rough apparel and awkward position.

His cap had fallen off and the sun glinted on a head of boyish brown curls. It was only in the lazy, good-natured face, puffy and loose-lipped, that one might read how recklessly Toppy Treplin had lived since achieving his football honors four years before.

THE sun crept up and found his eyes, and Toppy stirred. Slowly, even painfully, he raised his head from the table and looked around him. The crudeness of his surroundings made him sit up with a start. He looked first out of the window at the snow-covered "street." Across the way he saw a small, unpainted building bearing a scraggly sign, "Hotel." Beyond this the jack-pines loomed in a solid wall.

Toppy shuddered. He turned his face toward the man behind the bar, who had been regarding him for some time with a look of mingled surprise and amusement. Toppy shuddered again.

The man was a half-breed, and he wore a red woolen shirt. Worse, there was not a sign of a mirror behind the bar. It was distressing.

"Good morning, brother," said Toppy, concealing his repugnance. "Might I ask you for a little information this pleasant morning?"

The half-breed grinned appreciatively but skeptically.

"Little drink, I guess you mean, don't you?" said he. "Go 'head."

Toppy bowed courteously.

"Thank you, brother, thank you. I am sorely puzzled about two little matters—where am I anyway, and if so, how did I get here?"

The grin on the half-breed's face broadened. He pointed at the table in front of Toppy.

"You been sleeping there since 'bout midnight las' night," he explained.

Toppy waved his left hand to indicate his displeasure at the inadequacy of the bartender's reply.

"Obvious, my dear Watson, obvious," he said. "I know that I'm at this table, because here I am; and I know I've been sleeping here because I just woke up. Let's broaden the range of our information. What town is this, if it is a town, and if it is, how did I happen to come here, may I ask?"

The half-breed's grin disappeared, gradually to give place to an expression of amazement.

"You mean to say you come to this town and don't know what town it is?" he demanded. "Then why you come? What you do here?"

Toppy's brow corrugated in an expression of deep puzzlement.

"That's another thing that's rather puzzling, too, brother," he replied. "Why did I come? I'd like to know that, too. Like very, very much to know that. Where am I, how did I come here, and why? Three questions I'd like very, very much to have answered."

He sat for a moment in deep thought, then turned toward the bartender with the pleased look of a man who has found an inspiration.

"I tell you what you do, brother—you answer the first two questions and in the light of that information I'll see if I can't ponder out the third."

The half-breed leaned heavily across the single-plank bar and watched Toppy closely.

"This town is Rail Head," he said slowly, as if speaking to some one of whose mental capacity he had great doubts. "You come here by last night's train. You bring the train-crew over to have a drink; then you fall asleep. You been sleeping ever since. Now you remember?"

"Ah!"

The puzzled look went out of Toppy's eyes.

"Now I remember. Row with Harvey

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Duncombe. Wanted me to drink two to his one. Stepped outside. Saw little. train. Saw little girl. Stepped off big train, got on little train, and here I am. Fine little business."

"You went to sleep in the train coming up, the conductor told me," volunteered the half-breed. "You told them you wanted to go as far as you could, so they took you up here to the end of the line. You remember now, eh, why you come here?"

"Only too well, brother," replied Toppy wearily. "I—I just came to see your beautiful little city."

The bartender laughed bitterly.

"You come to a fine place. Didn't you ever hear 'bout Rail Head?" he asked. "I guess not, or you wouldn't have come. This town's the jumping-off place, that's what she is. It's the most God-forsaken, hopeless excuse for a town in the whole North Country. There's only two kind of business here—shipping men out to Hell Camp and skinning them when they come back. That's all. What you think of that for a fine town you've landed in, eh?"

"Fine," said Toppy. "I see you love it dearly, indeed."

The half-breed nodded grimly.

"It's all right for me; I own this place. Anybody else is sucker to come here, though. You ain't a Bohunk fool, so I don't think you come to hire out for Hell Camp. You just got too drunk, eh?"

"I suppose so," said Toppy, yawning. "What's this Hell Camp thing? Pleasant little name."

"An' pleasant little place," supplemented the man mockingly. "Ain't you never heard 'bout Hell Camp? 'Bout its boss—Reivers—the 'Snow-Burner'? Huh! Perhaps you want hire out there for job?"

"Perhaps," agreed Toppy. "What is it?"

"Oh, it ain't nothing so much. Just big log-camp run by man named Reivers—that's all. Indians call him Snow-Burner. Twenty-five, thirty miles out in the bush, at Cameron Dam. That's all. Very big camp. Everybody who comes to this town is going out there to work, or else hiding out."

"I see. But why the name?"

"Hell Camp?" The bartender's grin appeared again; then, as if a second thought on the matter had occurred to him, he assumed a noncommittal expression and yawned. "Oh, that's just nickname the boys give it. You see, the boys from camp come to town here in the Spring. Then sometimes they raise ——. That's why some people call it Hell Camp. That's all. Cameron Dam Camp is the right name."

"I see." Toppy was wondering why the man should take the trouble to lie to him. Of course he was lying. Even Toppy, with his bleared eyes, could see that the man had started to berate Hell Camp even as he had berated Rail Head and had suddenly switched and said nothing. It hurt Toppy's head. It wasn't fair to puzzle him this morning. "I see. Just—just a nickname."

"That's all," said the bartender. Briskly changing the subject he said: "Well, how 'bout it, stranger? You going to have eye-opener this morning?"

"I suppose so," said Toppy absently. He again turned his attention to the view from the window. On the low stairs of the hotel were seated half a dozen men whose flat, ox-like faces and foreign clothing marked them for immigrants, newly arrived, of the Slavic type. Some sat on wooden trunks oddly marked, others stood with bundles beneath their arms. They waited stolidly, blankly, with their eyes on the hotel door, as oxen wait for the coming of the man who is going to feed them. Toppy looked on with idle interest.

"I didn't think you could see anything like that this far away from Ellis Island," he said. "What are those fellows, brother?"

"Bohunks," said the bartender with a contemptuous jerk of the head. "They waiting to hire out for the Cameron Dam Camp. The agent he comes to the hotel. Well, what you going to have?"

"Bring me a whisky sour," said Toppy, without taking his eyes off the group across the street. The half-breed grinned and placed before him a bottle of whisky and a glass. Toppy frowned.

"A whisky sour, I said," he protested.

"When you get this far in the woods," laughed the man, "they all come out of one bottle. Drink up."

Once more Toppy shuddered. He was bored by this time.

"Your jokes up here are worse than your booze," he said wearily.

He poured out a scant drink and sat with the glass in his hand while his eyes were

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upon the group across the street. He was about to drink when a stir among the men drew his attention. The door of the hotel opened briskly. Toppy suddenly set down his glass.

The girl who had got on the narrow-gage out at the junction the night before had come out and was standing on the stairs, looking about her with an expression which to Toppy seemed plainly to spell, "Help!"

CHAPTER II

THE GIRL

TOPPY sat and stared across the street at her with a feeling much like awe. The girl was standing forth in the full morning sunlight, and Toppy's first impulse was to cross the street to her, his second to hide his face. She was small and young, the girl, and beautiful. She was a blonde, such a blonde as is found only in the North. The sun lighted up the aureole of light hair surrounding her head, so that even Toppy behind the windows of the Northern Light caught a vision of its fineness. Her cheeks bore the red of perfect health showing through a perfect, fair complexion, and even the thick red mackinaw which she wore did not hide the trimness of the figure beneath.

"What in the dickens is she doing here?" gasped Toppy. "She doesn't belong in a place like this."

But if this were true the girl apparently was entirely unconscious of it. Among that group of ox-like Slavs she stood with her little chin in the air, as much at home, apparently, as if those men were all her good friends. Only she looked about her now and then as if anxiously seeking a way out of a dilemma.

"What can she be doing here?" mused Toppy. "A little, pretty thing like her! She ought to be back home with mother and father and brother and sister, going to dancing-school, and all the rest of it."

Toppy was no stranger to pretty girls. He had met pretty girls by the score while at college. He had been adored by dozens. After college he had met still more. None of them had interested him to any inconvenient extent. After all, a man's friends are all men.

But this girl, Toppy admitted, struck him differently. He had never seen a girl that struck him like this before. He pushed his glass to one side. He was bored no longer. For the first time in four years the full shame of his mode of living was driven home to him, for as he feasted his eyes on the sun-kissed vision across the street his decent instincts whispered that a man who squandered and swilled his life away just because he had money had no right to raise his eyes to this girl.

"You're a waster, that's what you are," said Toppy to himself, "and she's one of those sweet——"

He was on his feet before the sentence was completed. In her perplexity the girl had turned to the men about her and apparently had asked a question. At first their utter unresponsiveness indicated that they did not understand.

Then they began to smile, looking at one another and at the girl. The brutal manner in which they fixed their eyes upon her sent the blood into Toppy's throat. White men didn't look at a woman that way.

Then one of the younger men spoke to the girl. Toppy saw her start and look at him with parted lips. The group gathered more closely around. The young man spoke again, grimacing and smirking bestially, and Toppy waited for no more. He was a waster and half drunk; but after all he was a white man, of the same breed as the girl on the stairs, and he knew his job.

He came across the snow-covered street like Toppy Treplin of old bent upon making a touchdown. Into the group he walked, head up, shouldering and elbowing carelessly. Toppy caught the young speaker by both shoulders and hurled him bodily back among his fellows. For an instant they faced Toppy, snarling, their hands cautiously sliding toward hidden knives. Then they groveled, cringing instinctively before the better breed.

Toppy turned to the girl and removed his cap. She had not cried out nor moved, and now she looked Toppy squarely in the eye. Toppy promptly hung his head. He had been thinking of her as something of a child. Now he saw his mistake. She was young, it is true—little over twenty perhaps—but there was an air of self-reliance and seriousness about her as if she had known responsibilities beyond her years. And her eyes were blue, Toppy saw—the perfect blue that went with her fair complexion.

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"I beg pardon," stammered Toppy. "I just happened to see—it looked as if they were getting fresh—so I thought I'd come across and—and see if there was anything—anything I could do."

"Thank you," said the girl a little breathlessly. "Are—are you the agent?"

Toppy shook his head. The look of perplexity instantly returned to the girl's face.

"I'm sorry; I wish I was," said Toppy. "If you'll tell me who the agent is, and so on—" he included most of the town of Rail Head in a comprehensive glance—"I'll probably be able to find him in a hurry."

"Oh, I couldn't think of troubling you. Thank you ever so much, though," she said hastily. "They told me in the hotel that he was outside here some place. I'll find him myself, thank you."

She stepped off the stairs into the snow of the street, every inch and line of her, from her solid tan boots to her sensible tassel cap, expressing the self-reliance and independence of the girl who is accustomed and able to take care of herself under trying circumstances.

The bright sun smote her eyes and she blinked, squinting deliciously. She paused for a moment, threw back her head and filled her lungs to the full with great drafts of the invigorating November air. Her mackinaw rose and fell as she breathed deeply, and more color came rushing into the roses of her cheeks. Apparently she had forgotten the existence of the Slavs, who still stood glowering at her and Toppy.

"Isn't it glorious?" she said, looking up at Toppy with her eyes puckered prettily from the sun. "Doesn't it just make you glad you're alive?"

"You bet it does!" said Toppy eagerly. He saw his opportunity to continue the conversation and hastened to take advantage. "I never knew air could be as exciting as this. I never felt anything like it. It's my first experience up here in the woods; I'm an utter stranger around here."

Having volunteered this information, he waited eagerly. The girl merely nodded.

"Of course. Anybody could see that," she said simply.

Toppy felt slightly abashed.

"Then you—you're not a stranger around here?" he asked.

She shook her head, the tassels of her cap and her aureole of light hair tossing gloriously.

"I'm a stranger here in this town," she said, "but I've lived up here in the woods, as you call it, all my life except the two years I was away at school. Not right in the woods, of course, but in small towns around. My father was a timber-estimator before he was hurt, and naturally we had to live close to the woods."

"Naturally," agreed Toppy, though he knew nothing about it. He tried to imagine any of the girls he knew back East accepting a stranger as a man and a brother who could be trusted at first hand, and he failed.

"I say," he said as she stepped away. "Just a moment, please. About this agent-thing. Won't you please let me go and look for him?" He waved his hands at the six saloons. "You see, there aren't many places here that a lady can go looking for a man in."

She hesitated, frowning at the lowly groggeries that constituted the major part of Rail Head's buildings.

"That's so," she said with a smile.

"Of course it is," said Toppy eagerly. "And the chances are that your man is in one of them, no matter who he is, because that's about the only place he can be here. You tell me who he is, or what he is, and I'll go hunt him up."

"That's very kind of you." She hesitated for a moment, then accepted his offer without further parley. "It's the employment agent of the Cameron Dam Company that I'm looking for. I am to meet him here, according to a letter they sent me, and he is to furnish a team and driver to take me out to the Dam."

Then she added calmly, "I'm going to keep books out there this Winter."

CHAPTER III

TOPPY GETS A JOB

TOPPY gasped. In the first place, he had not been thinking of her as a "working girl." None of the girls that he knew belonged to that class. The notion that she, with the childish dimple in her chin and the roses in her cheeks, was a girl who made her own living was hard to assimilate; the idea that she was going out to a camp in the woods—out to Hell Camp—to work was absolutely impossible!

"Keep books?" said Toppy, bewildered.

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"Do they keep books in a—in a logging-camp?"

It was her turn to look surprised.

"Do you know anything about Cameron Dam?" she asked.

"Nothing," admitted Toppy. "It's a logging-camp, though, isn't it?"

"Rather more than that, as I understand it," she replied. "They are building a town out there, according to my letter. There are over two hundred people there now. At present they're doing nothing but logging and building the dam; but they say they've found ore out there, and in the Spring the railroad is coming and the town will open up."

"And—and you're going to keep books there this Winter?"

She nodded. "They pay well. They're paying me seventy-five dollars a month and my board."

"And you don't know anything about the place?"

"Except what they've written in the letter engaging me."

"And still you're going out there—to work?"

"Of course," she said cheerfully. "Seventy-five-dollar jobs aren't to be picked up every day around here."

"I see," said Toppy. He remembered Harvey Duncombe's champagne bill of the night before and grew thoughtful. He himself had shuddered a short while before, at waking in a bar where there was no mirror, and he had planned to wire Harvey for five hundred to take him back to civilization. And here was this delicate little girl—as delicate to look upon as any of the petted and pampered girls he knew back East—cheerfully, even eagerly, setting her face toward the wilderness because therein lay a job paying the colossal sum of seventy-five dollars a month! And she was going alone!

A reckless impulse swayed Toppy. He decided not to wire Harvey.

"I see," he said thoughtfully. "I'll go find this agent. You'd better wait inside the hotel."

He crossed the street and systematically began to search through the six saloons. In the third place he found his man, shaking dice with an Indian. The agent was a lean, long-nosed individual who wore thick glasses and talked through his nose.

"Yes, I'm the Cameron Dam agent," he drawled, curiously eying Toppy from head to toe. "Simmons is my name. What can I do for you?"

"I want a job," said Toppy. "A job out at Hell Camp."

The agent laughed shortly at the name.

"You're wise, are you?" he said. "And still you want a job out there? Well, I'm sorry. That load of Bohunks across the street fills me up. I can't use any more rough labor just at present. I'm looking for a blacksmith's helper, but I guess that ain't you."

"That's me," said Toppy resolutely. "That's the job I want—blacksmith's helper. That's my job."

The agent looked him over with the critical eye of a man skilfully appraising bone and muscle.

"You're big enough, that's sure," he drawled. "You've got the shoulders and arms, too, but—let's see your hands."

Toppy held up his hands, huge in size, but entirely innocent of callouses or other signs of wear. The agent grinned.

"Soft as a woman's," he said scornfully. "When did you ever do any blacksmithing? Long time ago, wasn't it? Before you were born, I guess."

Toppy's right hand shot out and fell upon the agent's thin arm. Slowly and steadily he squeezed until the man writhed and grimaced with pain.

"Wow! Leggo!" The agent peered over his thick glasses with something like admiration in his eyes. "Say, you're there with the grip, all right, big fellow. Where'd you get it?"

"Swinging a sledge," lied Toppy solemnly. "And I've come here to get that job."

Simmons shook his head.

"I can't do it," he protested. "If I should send you out and you shouldn't make good, Reivers would be sore."

"Who's this man Reivers?"

The agent's eyes over his glasses expressed surprise.

"I thought you were wise to Hell Camp?" he said.

"Oh, I'm wise enough," said Toppy impatiently. "I know what it is. But who's this Reivers?"

"He's the boss," said Simmons shortly. "D'you mean to say you never heard about Hell-Camp Reivers, the Snow-Burner?"

"No, I haven't," replied Toppy impatiently. "But that doesn't make any

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difference. You send me out there; I'll make good, don't worry." He paused and sized his man up. "Come over here, Simmons," he said with a significant wink, leading the way toward the door. "I want that job; I want it badly." Toppy dived into his pockets. Two bills came to light—two twenties. He slipped them casually into Simmons's hand. "That's how bad I want it. Now how about it?"

The fashion in which Simmons's thin fingers closed upon the money told Toppy that he was not mistaken in the agent's character.

"You'll be taking your own chances," warned Simmons, carefully pocketing the money. "If you don't make good—well, you'll have to explain to Reivers, that's all. You must have an awful good reason for wanting to go out."

"I have."

"Hiding from something, mebbe?" suggested Simmons.

"Maybe," said Toppy. "And, say—there's a young lady over at the hotel who's looking for you. Said you were to furnish her with a sleigh to get out to Cameron Dam."

An evil smile broke over the agent's thin face as he moved toward the door.

"The new bookkeeper, I suppose," he said, winking at Toppy. "Aha! Now I understand why you——"

Toppy caught him two steps from the door. His fingers sank into the man's withered biceps.

"No, you don't understand," he hissed grimly. "Get that? You don't understand anything about it."

"All right," snapped the cowed man. "Leggo my arm. I was just joshing. You can take a joke, can't you? Well, then, come along. As long as you're going out you might as well go at once. I've got to get a double team, anyhow, for the lady, and you've got to start now to make it before dark. Ready to start now?"

"All ready," said Toppy.

At the door the agent paused.

"Say, you haven't said anything about wages yet," he said quizzically.

"That's so," said Toppy, as if he had forgotten. "How much am I going to get?"

"Sixty a month."

The agent couldn't understand why the new man should laugh. It struck Toppy as funny that a little girl with a baby dimple in her chin should be earning more money than he. Also, he wondered what Harvey Duncombe and the rest of the bunch would have thought had they known.

TOPPY followed the agent to the stable behind the hotel, where Simmons routed out an old hunchbacked driver who soon brought forth a team of rangy bays drawing a light double-seated sleigh.

"Company outfit," explained Simmons. "Have to have a team; one horse can't make it. You can ride in the front seat with the driver. The lady will ride behind."

As Toppy clambered in Simmons hurriedly whispered something in the ear of the driver, who was fastening a trace. The hunchback nodded.

"I got this job because I can keep my mouth shut," he muttered. "Don't you worry about anybody pumping me."

He stepped in beside Toppy; and the bays, prancing in the snow, went around to the front of the hotel on the run. There was a wait of a few minutes; then Simmons came out, followed by the girl carrying her suitcase. Toppy sprang out and took it from her hand.

"You people are going to be together on a long drive, so I'd better introduce you," said Simmons. "Miss Pearson, Mr.——"

"Treplin," said Toppy honestly.

"Treplin," concluded Simmons. "New bookkeeper, new blacksmith's helper. Get in the back seat, Miss Pearson. Cover yourself well up with those robes. Bundle in—that's right. Put the suitcase under your feet. That's right. All right, Jerry," he drawled to the driver. "You'd better keep going pretty steady to make it before dark."

"Don't nobody need to tell me my business," said the surly hunchback, tightening the lines; and without any more ado they were off, the snow flying from the heels of the mettlesome bays.

For the first few miles the horses, fresh from the stable and exhilarated to the dancing-point by the sun, air and snow, provided excitement which prevented any attempt at conversation. Then, when their dancing and shying had ceased and they had settled down to a steady, long-legged jog that placed mile after mile of the white road behind them with the regularity of a machine, Toppy turned his eyes toward the girl in the back seat.

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He quickly turned them to the front again. Miss Pearson, snuggled down to her chin in the thick sleigh-robes, her eyes squinting deliciously beneath the sharp sun, was studying him with a frankness that was disconcerting, and Toppy, probably for the first time in his life, felt himself gripped by a great shyness and confusion. There was wonderment in the girl's eyes, and suspicion.

"She's wise," thought Toppy sadly. "She knows I've been hitting it up, and she knows I made up my mind to come out here after I talked with her. A fine opinion she must have of me! Well, I deserve it. But just the same I've got to see the thing through now. I can't stand for her going out all alone to a place with a reputation like Hell Camp. I'm a dead one with her, all right; but I'll stick around and see that she gets a square deal."

Consequently the drive, which Toppy had hoped would lead to more conversation and a closer acquaintance with the girl, resolved itself into a silent, monotonous affair which made him distinctly uncomfortable. He looked back at her again. This time also he caught her eyes full upon him, but this time after an instant's scrutiny she looked away with a trace of hardness about her lips.

"I'm in bad at the start with her, sure," groaned Toppy inwardly. "She doesn't want a thing to do with me, and quite right at that."

His tentative efforts at opening a conversation with the driver met instant and convincing failure.

"I hear they've got quite a place out here," began Toppy casually.

"None of my business if they have," grunted the driver.

Toppy laughed.

"You're a sociable brute! Why don't you bark and be done with it?"

The driver viciously pulled the team to a dead stop and turned upon Toppy with a look that could come only from a spirit of complete malevolence.

"Don't try to talk to me, young feller," he snapped, showing old yellow teeth. "My job is to haul you out there, and that's all. I don't talk. Don't waste your time trying to make me. Giddap!"

He cut viciously at the horses with his whip, pulled his head into the collar of his fur coat with the motion of a turtle retiring into its shell, and for the rest of the drive spoke only to the horses.

Toppy, snubbed by the driver and feeling himself shunned, perhaps even despised, by Miss Pearson, now had plenty of time to think over the situation calmly. The crisp November air whipping his face as the sleigh sped steadily along drove from his brain the remaining fumes of Harvey Duncombe's champagne. He saw the whole affair clearly now, and he promptly called himself a great fool.

What business was it of his if a girl wanted to go out to work in a place like Hell Camp? Probably it was all right. Probably there was no necessity, no excuse for his having made a fool of himself by going with her. Why had he done it, anyhow? Getting interested in anything because of a girl was strange conduct for him. He couldn't call to mind a single tangible reason for his actions. He had acted on the impulse, as he had done scores of times before; and, as he had also done scores of times before, he felt that he had made a fool of himself.

He tried to catch the girl's eyes once more, to read in them some sign of relenting, some excuse for opening a conversation. But as he turned his head Miss Pearson also turned and looked away with uncompromising severity. Toppy studied the purity of her profile, the innocence of the baby dimple in her chin, out of the corner of his eye. And as he turned and glanced at the evil face of the hunchback driver he settled himself with a sigh, and thought—

"Nevertheless, and notwithstanding the fact that I've been a fool, I am glad that I'm here."

At noon the road plunged out of the scant jack-pine forest into the gloom of a hemlock swamp. Toppy shuddered as he contemplated what the fate of a man might be who should be unfortunate enough to get lost in that swamp. A mile in the swamp, on a slight knoll, they came to a tiny cabin guarding a gate across the road. An old, bearded woodsman came out of the cabin and opened the gate, and the hunchback pulled up and proceeded to feed his team.

"Dinner's waiting inside," called the gate-tender. "Come in and eat, miss—and you, too; I suppose you're hungry?" he added to Toppy.

"And hurry up, too," growled the hunchback. "I give you twenty minutes."

"Thank you very much," said the girl,

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diving into her suitcase. "I've brought my own lunch."

She brought out some sandwiches and proceeded to nibble at them without moving from the sleigh. Toppy tumbled into the cabin in company with the hunchback driver. A rough meal was on the table and the fell to without a word. Toppy noticed that the old woodsman sat on a bench near the door where he could keep an eye on the road. Above the bench hung a pair of field-glasses, a repeating shotgun and a high-power Winchester rifle.

"Any hunting around here?" asked Toppy cheerily.

"Sometimes," said the old watcher with a smile that made Toppy wonder.

HE DID not pursue the subject, for there was something about the lonely cabin, the bearded old man, and the rifle on the wall that suggested something much more grim than sport.

The driver soon bolted his meal and went back to the sleigh. Toppy followed, and twenty minutes after pulling up they were on the road again. With each mile that they passed now the swamp grew wilder and the gloom of the wilderness more oppressive. To right and left among the trees Toppy made out stretches of open water, great springs and little creeks which never froze and which made the swamp even in Winter a treacherous morass.

Toward the end of the short afternoon the swamp suddenly gave way to a rough, untimbered ridge. Red rocks, which Toppy later learned contained iron ore, poked their way like jagged teeth through the snow. The sleigh mounted the ridge, the runners grating on bare rock and dirt, dipped down into a ravine between two ridges, swung off almost at right angles in a cleft in the hills —and before Toppy realized that the end of the drive had come, they were in full view of a large group of log buildings on the edge of a dense pine forest and were listening to the roar of the waters of Cameron Dam.

CHAPTER IV

"HELL-CAMP" REIVERS

IN THE face of things there was nothing about the place to suggest that it deserved the title of Hell Camp. The Cameron Dam Camp, as Toppy saw it now, consisted of seven neat log buildings. Of these the first six were located on the road which led into the camp, three on each side. These buildings were twice as large as the ordinary log buildings which Toppy had seen in the woods; but they were thoroughly dwarfed and overshadowed by the seventh, which lay beyond them, and into the enormous doorway of which the road seemed to disappear. This building was larger than the other six combined—was built of huge logs, apparently fifteen feet high; and its wall, which stretched across the road, seemed to have no windows or openings of any kind save a great double door.

Toppy had no time for a careful scrutiny of the place, as the hunchback swiftly pulled up before the first building of the camp, a well built double-log affair with large front windows and a small sign, "Office and Store." Directly across the road from this building was one bearing the sign, "Blacksmith Shop," and Toppy gazed with keen curiosity at a short man with white hair and broad shoulders who, with a blacksmith's hammer in his hand, came to the door of the shop as they drove up. Probably this was the man for whom he was to work.

"Hey, Jerry," greeted the blacksmith with a burr in his speech that labeled him unmistakably as a Scot.

"Hey, Scotty," replied the hunchback.

"Did ye bring me a helper?"

"Yes," grunted Jerry.

"Good!" said the blacksmith, and returned to his anvil.

The hunchback turned to the girl as soon as the team had come to a standstill.

"This is where you go," he said, indicating the office with a nod. "You," he grunted to Toppy, "sit right where you are till we go see the boss."

An Indian squaw, nearly as broad as she was tall, came waddling out of the store as Miss Pearson stepped stiffly from the sleigh. Toppy wished for courage to get out and carry the girl's suitcase, but he feared that his action would be misinterpreted; so he sat still, eagerly watching out of the corner of his eyes.

"I carry um," said the squaw as the girl dragged forth her baggage. "You go in."

Then the sleigh drove abruptly ahead toward the great building at the end of the road, and Toppy's final view of the scene was Miss Pearson stumping stiffly into the

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office-building with the squaw, the suitcase held in her arms, waddling behind. Miss Pearson did not look in his direction.

AND now Toppy had his first shock. For he saw that the building toward which they were hurrying was not a building at all, but merely a stockade-wall, which seemed to surround all of the camp except the six buildings which were outside. What he had thought a huge doorway was in reality a great gate.

This gate swung open at their approach, and Toppy's second shock came when he saw that the two hard-faced men who opened it carried in the crooks of their arms wicked-looking, short-barreled repeating shotguns. One of the men caught the horses by the heads as soon as they were through the gate, and brought them to a dead stop, while the other closed the gate behind them.

"Can't you see the boss is busy?" snapped the man who had stopped the team. "You wait right here till he's through."

Toppy now saw that they had driven into a quadrangle, three sides of which were composed of long, low, log buildings with doors and windows cut at frequent intervals, the fourth side being formed by the stockade-wall through which they had just passed. The open space which thus lay between four walls of solid logs was perhaps fifty yards long by twenty-five yards wide. In his first swift sight of the place Toppy saw that, with the stockade-gate closed and two men with riot-guns on guard, the place was nothing more nor less than an effective prison. Then his attention was riveted spell-bound by what was taking place in the yard.

On the sunny side of the yard a group of probably a dozen men were huddled against the log wall. Two things struck Toppy as he looked at them—their similarity to the group of Slavs he had seen back in Rail Head, and the complete terror in their faces as they cringed tightly against the log wall. Perhaps ten feet in front of them, and facing them, stood a man alone. And Toppy, as he beheld the terror with which the dozen shrank back from the one, and as he looked at the man, knew that he was looking upon Hell-Camp Reivers, the man who was called The Snow-Burner.

Toppy Treplin was not an impressionable young man. He had lived much and swiftly and among many kinds of men, and it took something remarkable in the man-line to surprise him. But the sight of Reivers brought from him a start, and he sat staring, completely fascinated by the Manager's presence.

It was not the size of Reivers that held him, for Toppy at first glance judged correctly that Reivers and himself might have come from the same mold so far as height and weight were concerned. Neither was it the terrible physical power which fairly reeked from the man; for though Reivers' rough clothing seemed merely light draperies on the huge muscles that lay beneath, Toppy had played with strong men, professionals and amateurs, enough to be blasé in the face of a physical Colossus. It was the calm, ghastly brutality of the man, the complete brutality of an animal, dominated by a human intelligence, that held Toppy spellbound.

Reivers, as he stood there alone, glowering at the poor wretches who cowered from him like pygmies, was like a tiger preparing to spring and carefully calculating where his claws and fangs might sink in with most damage to his victims. He stood with his feet close together, his thumbs hooked carelessly in his trousers' pockets, his head thrust far forward. Toppy had a glimpse of a long, thin nose, thin lips parted in a sneer, heavily browed eyes, and, beneath the back-thrust cap, a mass of curly light hair—hair as light as the girl's! Then Reivers spoke.

"Rosky!" he said in a voice that was half snarl, half bellow.

There was a troubled movement among the dozen men huddled against the wall, but there came no answer.

"Rosky! Step out!" commanded Reivers in a tone whose studied ferocity made Toppy shudder.

In response, a tall, broad-shouldered Slay, the oldest and largest man in the group, stepped sullenly out and stood a yard in front of his fellows. He had taken off his cap and held it tightly in his clenched right hand, and the expression on his flat face as he stood with hanging head and scowled at Reivers was one half of fear and half of defiance.

"You no can hit me," he muttered doggedly. "I citizen; I got first papers."

Reivers's manner underwent a change.

"Hit you?" he repeated softly. "Who

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wants to hit you? I just want to talk with you. I hear you're thinking of quitting. I hear you've planned to take these fellows with you when you go. How about it, Rosky?"

"I got papers," said the man sullenly. "I citizen; I quit job when I want."

"Yes?" said Reivers gently. It was like a tiger playing with a hedgehog, and Toppy sickened. "But you signed to stay here six months, didn't you?"

The gentleness of the Manager had deceived the thick-witted Slav and he grew bold.

"I drunk when I sign," he said loudly. "All these fallow drunk when they sign. I quit. They quit. You no can keep us here if we no want stay."

"I can't?" Still Reivers saw fit to play with his victim.

"No," said the man. "And you no dare hit us again, no."

"No?" purred Reivers softly. "No, certainly not; I wouldn't hit you. You're quite right, Rosky. I won't hit you; no."

He was standing at least seven feet from his man, his feet close together, his thumbs still hooked in his trousers' pockets. Suddenly, and so swiftly that Rosky did not have time to move, Reivers took a step forward and shot out his right foot. His boot seemed barely to touch the shin-bone of Rosky's right leg, but Toppy heard the bone snap as the Slav, with a shriek of pain and terror, fell face downward, prone in the trampled snow at Reivers' feet.

And Reivers did not look at him. He was standing as before, as if nothing had happened, as if he had not moved. His eyes were upon the other men,who, appalled at their leader's fate, huddled more closely against the log wall.

"Well, how about it?" demanded Reivers icily after a long silence. "Any more of you fellows think you want to quit?"

Half of the dozen cried out in terror:

"No, no! We no quit. Please, boss; we no quit."

A smile of complete contempt curled Reivers' thin upper lip.

"You poor scum, of course you ain't going to quit," he sneered. "You'll stay here and slave away until I'm through with you. And don't you even dare think of quitting. Rosky thought he'd kept his plans mighty secret—thought I wouldn't know what he was planning. You see what happened to him.

"I know everything that's going on in this camp. If you don't believe it, try it out and see. Now pick this thing up—" he stirred the groaning Rosky contemptuously with his foot—"and carry him into his bunk. I'll be around and set his leg when I get ready. Then get back to the rock-pile and make up for the time it's taken to teach you this lesson."

THE brutality of the thing had frozen Toppy motionless where he sat in the sleigh. At the same time he was conscious of a thrill of admiration for the dominant creature who had so contemptuously crippled a fellow man. A brute Reivers certainly was, and well he deserved the name of Hell Camp Reivers; but a born captain he was, too, though his dominance was of a primordial sort.

Turning instantly from his victim as from a piece of business that is finished, Reivers looked around and came toward the sleigh. Some primitive instinct prompted Toppy to step out and stretch himself leisurely, his long arms above his head, his big chest inflated to the limit. At the sight of him a change came over Reivers' face. The brutality and contempt went out of it like a flash. His eyes lighted up with pleasure at the sight of Toppy's magnificent proportions, and he smiled a quick smile of comradeship, such as one smiles when he meets a fellow and equal, and held out his hand to Toppy.

"University man, I'll wager," he said, in the easy voice of a man of culture. "Glad to see you; more than glad! These beasts are palling on me. They're so cursed physical—no mind, no spirit in them. Nothing but so many pounds of meat and bone. Old Campbell, my blacksmith, is the only other intelligent being in camp, and he's Scotch and believes in predestination and original sin, so his conversation's rather trying for a steady diet."

Toppy shook hands, amazed beyond expression. Except for his shaggy eyebrows —brows that somehow reminded Toppy of the head of a bear he had once shot—Reivers now was the sort of man one would expect to meet in the University Club rather than in a logging-camp. The brute had vanished, the gentleman had appeared; and Toppy was forced to smile in answer to Reivers' genial smile of greeting. And yet, somewhere back in Reivers' blue eyes

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Toppy saw lurking something which said, "I am your master—doubt it if you dare."

"I hired out as blacksmith's helper," he explained. "My name's Treplin."

He did not take his eyes from Reivers'. Somehow he had the sensation that Reivers' will and his own had leaped to a grapple.

Reivers laughed aloud in friendly fashion.

"Blacksmith's helper, eh?" he said. "That's good; that's awfully good! Well, old man, I don't care what you hired out for, or what your right name is; you're a developed human being and you'll be somebody to talk to when these brutes grow too tiresome." He turned to Jerry, the driver. "Well?" he said curtly.

Jerry nodded.

"She's in the office now," he said.

"All right." Reivers turned and went briskly toward the gate. "Turn Mr. Treplin over to Campbell. You'll live with Campbell, Treplin," he called over his shoulder, as he went through the gate. "And you hit the back trail, Jerry, right away."

As Jerry swung the team around Toppy saw that Reivers was going toward the office with long, eager strides.

CHAPTER V

TOPPY OVERHEARS A CONVERSATION

OLD Campbell, the blacksmith, had knocked off from the day's work when, a few minutes later, Toppy stepped from the sleigh before the door of the shop.

"Go through the shop to that room in the back," said Jerry. "You'll find him in there." And he drove off without another word.

Toppy walked in and knocked at a door in a partition across the rear of the shop.

"Come in," spluttered a moist, cheery voice, and Toppy entered. The old blacksmith, naked to the waist and soaped from shoulders to ears, looked up from the steaming tub in which he was carefully removing every trace of the day's smut. He peered sharply at Toppy, and at the sight of the young man's good-natured face he smiled warmly through the suds.

"Come in, come in. Shut the door," he cried, plunging back into the hot water. "I tak' it that you're my new helper? Well—" he wiped the suds from his eyes and looked Toppy over—"though it's plain ye never did a day's blacksmithing in your life, I bid ye welcome, nevertheless. Ye look like an educated man. Well, 'twill be a pleasure and an honor for me to teach ye something more important than all ye've learned before—and that is, how to work."

"I see ye cam' without baggage of any kind. Go ye now across to the store before it closes and draw yerself two blankets for yer bunk. By the time you're back I'll have our supper started and then we'll proceed to get acqua'nted.

"Tell me!" exploded Toppy, who could hold in no longer. "What kind of a man or beast is this Reivers? Why, I just saw him deliberately break a man's leg out there in the yard! What kind of a place is this, anyhow—a penal colony?"

Campbell turned away and picked up a towel before replying.

"Reivers is a great man who worships after strange gods," he said solemnly. "But you'll have plenty of time to learn about that later. Go ye over to the store now without further waiting. Ye'll find them closed if ye dally longer; and then ye'll have a cold night, for there's no blankets here for your bunk. Hustle, lad; we'll talk about things after supper."

Toppy obeyed cheerfully. It was growing dark now, and as he stepped out of the shop he saw the squaw lighting the lamps in the building across the street. Toppy crossed over and found the door open. Inside there was a small hallway with two doors, one labeled "Store," the other "Office." Toppy was about to enter the store, when he heard Miss Pearson's voice in the office, and her first words, which came plainly through the partition, made him pause.

"MR. REIVERS," she was saying in tones that she struggled to make firm, "you know that if I had known you were running this camp I would never have come here. You deceived me. You signed the name of Simmons to your letter. You knew that if you had signed your own name I would not be here. You tricked me.

"And you promised solemnly last Summer when I told you I never could care for you that you would never trouble me again. How could you do this? You've got the reputation among men of never

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breaking your word. Why couldn't you—why couldn't you keep your word with me—a woman?"

Toppy, playing the rôle of eavesdropper for the first time, scarcely breathed as he caught the full import of these words. Then Reivers began to speak, his deep voice rich with earnestness and feeling.

"I will—I am keeping my word to you, Helen," he said. "I said I would not trouble you again; and I will not. It's true that I did not let you know that I was running this camp; and I did it because I wanted you to have this job, and I knew you wouldn't come if you knew I was here. You wouldn't let me give you, or even loan you, the three hundred dollars necessary for your father's operation.

"I know you, Helen, and I know that you haven't had a happy day since you were told that your father would be a well man after an operation and you couldn't find the money to pay for it. I knew you were going to work in hopes of earning it. I had this place to fill in the office here; I was authorized to pay as high as seventy-five dollars for a good bookkeeper. Naturally I thought of you.

"I knew there was no other place where you could earn seventy-five dollars a month, and save it. I knew you wouldn't come if I wrote you over my own name. So I signed Simmons' name, and you came. I said I would not trouble you any more, and I keep my word. The situation is this: you will be in charge of this office—if you stay; I am in charge of the camp. You will have little or nothing to do with me; I will manage so that you will need to see me only when absolutely necessary. Your living-rooms are in the rear of the office. I live in the stockade. Tilly, the squaw, will cook and wash for you, and do the hard work in the store. In four months you will have the three hundred dollars that you want for your father.

"I had much rather you would accept it from me as a loan on a simple business basis; but as you won't, this is the next best thing. And you mustn't feel that you are accepting any favor from me. On the contrary, you will, if you stay, be solving a big problem for me. I simply can not handle accounts. A strange bookkeeper could rob me and the company blind, and I'd never know it. I know you won't do that; and I know that you're efficient.

"That's the situation. I am keeping my word; I will not trouble you. If you decide to accept, go in and take off your hat and coat and tell Tilly to prepare supper for you. She will obey your orders blindly; I have told her to. If you decide that you don't want to stay, say the word and I will have one of the work-teams hooked up and you can go back to Rail Head tonight.

"But whichever you do, Helen, please remember that I have not broken—and never will break—my promise to you."

Before Reivers had begun to speak Toppy had hated the man as a contemptible sneak guilty of lying to get the girl at his mercy. The end of the Manager's speech left him bewildered. One couldn't help wanting to believe every word that Reivers said, there were so much manliness and sincerity in his tone. On the other hand, Toppy had seen his face when he was handling the unfortunate Rosky, and the unashamed brute that had showed itself then did not fit with this remarkable speech. Then Toppy heard Reivers coming toward the door.

"I will leave you; you can make up your mind alone," he said. "I've got to attend to one of the men who has been hurt. If you decide to go back to Rail Head, tell Tilly, and she'll hunt me up and I'll send a team over right away."

He stepped briskly out in the hallway and saw Toppy standing with his hand on the door of the store.

"Oh, hello, there!" he called out cheerily. "Campbell tell you to draw your blankets? That's the first step in the process of becoming a—guest at Hell Camp. Get a pair of XX; they're the warmest."

He passed swiftly out of the building.

"I say, Treplin," he called back from a distance, "did you ever set a broken leg?"

"Never," said Toppy.

"I'll give you 'Davis on Fractures' to read up on," said Reivers with a laugh. "I think I'll appoint you M. D. to this camp. 'Doctor Treplin.' How would that be?"

His careless laughter came floating back as he made his way swiftly to the stockade.

For a moment Toppy stood irresolute. Then he did something that required more courage from him than anything he had done before in his life. He stepped boldly across the hallway and entered the office, closing the door behind him.

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CHAPTER VI

"NICE BOY!"

"MISS PEARSON!" Toppy spoke as he crossed the threshold; then he stopped short.

The girl was sitting in a big chair before a desk in the farther corner of the room. She was dressed just as she had been on the drive; she had not removed cap, coat or gloves since arriving. Her hands lay palms up in her lap, her square little shoulders sagged, and her face was pale and troubled. A tiny crease of worry had come between her wonderful blue eyes, and her gaze wandered uncertainly, as if seeking help in the face of a problem that had proved too hard for her to handle alone. At the sight of Toppy, instead of giving way to a look of relief, her troubled expression deepened. She started. She seemed even to shrink from him. The words froze in Toppy's mouth and he stood stock still.

"Don't!" he groaned boyishly. "Please don't look at me like that, Miss Pearson! I—I'm not that sort. I want to help you—if you need it. I heard what Reivers just said. I—— What do you take me for, anyhow? A mucker who would force himself upon a lady?"

The anguish in his tone and in his honest, good-natured countenance was too real to be mistaken. He had cried out from the depths of a clean heart which had been stirred strangely, and the woman in the girl responded with quick sympathy. She looked at him with a look that would have aroused the latent manhood in a cad—which Toppy was not—and Toppy, in his eagerness, found that he could look back.

"Why did you come out here?" she asked plaintively. "Why did you decide to follow me, after you had heard that I was coming here? I know you did that; you hadn't intended coming here until you heard. What made you do it?"

"Because you came here," said Toppy honestly.

"But why—why——"

Toppy had regained control of himself.

"Why do you think I did it, Miss Pearson?" he asked quietly.

"I—I don't want to think—what I think," she stammered.

"And that is that I'm a cad, the sort of a mucker who forces his attentions upon women who are alone."

"Well—" she looked up with a challenge in her eyes—"you had been drinking, hadn't you? Could you blame me if I did?"

"Not a bit," said Toppy. "I'm the one who's to blame. I'm the goat. I don't suppose I had a right to butt in. Of course I didn't. I'm a big fool; always have been. I—I just couldn't stand for seeing you start out for this Hell Camp alone; that's all. It's no reason, I know, but—there you are. I'd heard something of the place in the morning and I had a notion it was a pretty tough place. You—you didn't look as if you were used to anything of the sort—— Well," he wound up desperately, "it didn't look right, your going off alone among all these roughnecks; and—and that's why I butted in."

She made no reply, and Toppy continued:

"I didn't have any right to do it, I know. I deserve to be suspected——"

"No!" she laughed. "Please, Mr. Treplin! That was horrid of me."

"Why was it?" he demanded abruptly. "Especially after you knew—after this morning. But—here's the situation: I thought you might need a side-kicker to see you through, and I appointed myself to the job. You won't believe that, I suppose, but that's because you don't know how foolish I can be."

He stopped clumsily, abashed by the wondering scrutiny to which she was subjecting him. She arose slowly from the chair and came toward him.

"I believe you, Mr. Treplin," she said. "I believe you're a decent sort of boy. I want to thank you; but why—why should you think this necessary?"

She looked at him, smiling a little, and Toppy, wincing from her "boy," grew flustered.

"Well, you're not sorry I came?" he stammered.

For reply she shook her head. Toppy took a long breath.

"Thanks!" he said with such genuine relief that she was forced to smile.

"But I'm a perfect stranger to you," she said uncertainly. "I can't understand why you should feel prompted to sacrifice yourself so to help me."

"Sacrifice!" cried Toppy. "Why, I'm the one——" He stopped. He didn't know just what he had intended to say. Something

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that he had no business saying, probably. "Anybody would have done it—anybody who wasn't a mucker, I mean. You can't have any use for me, of course, knowing what kind of a dub I've been, but if you'll just look on me as somebody you can trust and fall back on in case of need, and who'll do anything you want or need, I—I'll be more than paid."

"I do trust you, Mr. Treplin," she said, and held out her hand. "But—do I look as if I needed a chaperon?"

Toppy trembled at the firm grip of the small, gloved fingers.

"I told you I'd heard what Reivers said," he said hastily. "I didn't mean to; I was just coming in to get some blankets. I don't suppose you're going to stay here now, are you?"

She began to draw off her gloves.

"Yes," she said quietly. "Mr. Reivers is a gentleman and can be depended upon to keep his word."

Toppy winced once more. She had called him a "decent boy;" she spoke of Reivers as a "gentleman."

"But—good gracious, Miss Pearson! Three hundred dollars——If that's all——"

He stopped, for her little jaw had set with something like a click.

"Are you going to spoil things by offering to lend me that much money?" she asked. "Didn't you hear that Mr. Reivers had offered to do it? And Mr. Reivers isn't a complete stranger to me—as you are."

She placed her gloves in a pocket and proceeded to unbutton her mackinaw.

"I don't think you could mean anything wrong by it," she continued. "But please don't mention it again. You don't wish to humiliate me, do you?"

"Miss Pearson!" stammered Toppy, miserable.

"Don't, please don't," she said. "It's all right." Her natural high spirits were returning. "Everything's all right. Mr. Reivers never breaks his word, and he's promised—you heard him, you say? And you've promised to be my—what did you call it?—'side-kicker,' so everything's fine. Except—" a look of disgust passed over her eyes—"your drinking. Oh," she cried as she saw the shame flare into Toppy's face, "I didn't mean to hurt you—but how can nice boys like you throw themselves away?"

NICE boy! Toppy looked at his toes for a long time. So that was what she thought of him! Nice boy!

"Do you know much about Reivers?" he asked at last, as if he had forgotten her words. "Or don't you want to tell me about him?" He had sensed that he was infinitely Reivers's inferior in her estimation, and it hurt.

"Certainly I do," she said. "Mr. Reivers was a foreman for the company that my father was estimator for. When father was hurt last Summer Mr. Reivers came to see him on company business. It's father's spine; he couldn't move; Reivers had to come to him. He saw me, and two hours after our meeting he—he asked me to marry him. He asked me again a week later, and once after that. Then I told him that I never could care for him and he went away and promised he'd never trouble me again. You heard our conversation. I hadn't seen or heard of him since, until he walked into this room. That's all I know about him, except that people say he never breaks his word."

Toppy winced as he caught the note of confidence in her voice and thought of the sudden deadly treachery of Reivers in dealing with Rosky. The girl with a lithe movement threw off her mackinaw.

"By Jove!" Toppy exploded in boyish admiration. "You're the bravest little soul I ever saw in my life! Going against a game like this, just to help your father!"

"Well, why shouldn't I?" she asked. "I'm the only one father has got. We're all alone, father and I; and father is too proud to take help from any one else; and—and," she concluded firmly, "so am I. As for being brave—have you anything against Mr. Reivers personally?"

Thoroughly routed, Toppy turned to the door. "Good night, Miss Pearson," he said politely.

"Good night, Mr. Treplin. And thank you for—going out of your way." But had she seen the flash in Toppy's eye and the set of his jaw she might not have laughed so merrily as he flung out of the room.

In the store on the other side of the hallway Toppy was surprised to find Tilly, the squaw, waiting patiently behind a low counter on which lay a pair of blankets bearing a tag "XX." As he entered, the woman pushed the blankets toward him and pointed to a card lying on the counter.

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"Put um name here," she said, indicating a dotted line on the card and offering Toppy a pencil tied on a string.

Toppy saw that the card was a receipt for the blankets. As he signed, he looked closely at the squaw. He was surprised to see that she was a young woman, and that her features and expression distinguished her from the other squaws he had seen by the intelligence they indicated. Tilly was no mere clod in a red skin. Somewhere back of her inscrutable Indian eyes was a keen, strong mind.

"How did you know what I wanted?" Toppy asked as he packed the blankets under his arm.

The squaw made no sign that she had heard. Picking up the card, she looked carefully at his signature and turned to hang the card on a hook.

"So you were listening when Reivers was talking to me, were you?" said Toppy. "Did you listen after he went out?"

"Mebbe," grunted Tilly. "Mebbe so; mebbe no." And with this she turned and waddled back into the living-quarters in the rear of the store.

Toppy looked after her dumfounded.

"Huh!" he said to himself. "I'll bet two to one that Reivers knows all about what we said before morning. I suppose that will mean something doing pretty quick. Well, the quicker the better."

CHAPTER VII

THE SNOW-BURNER'S CREED

WHEN Toppy returned to the room in the rear of the blacksmith-shop he found Campbell waiting impatiently.

"Eh, lad, but you're the slow one!" greeted the gruff old Scot as Toppy entered. "You've set a record in this camp; no man yet has been able to consume so much time getting a pair of blankets from the wannigan. Dump 'em in yon bunk in the corner and set the table. I'll have supper in a wink and a half."

Toppy obediently tossed his blankets into the bunk indicated and turned to help to the best of his ability. The place now was lighted generously by two large reflector-lamps hung on the walls, and Toppy had his first good view of the room that was to be his home.

He was surprised at its neatness and comfort. It was a large room, though a little low under the roof, as rooms have a habit of being in the North. In the farthest corner were two bunks, the sleeping-quarters. Across the room from this, a corner was filled with well filled bookshelves, a table with a reading-lamp, and two easy chairs, giving the air of a tiny library. In the corner farthest from this was the cook-stove, and in the fourth corner stood an oilcloth-covered table with a shelf filled with dishes hung above it. Though the rough edges of hewn logs shown here and there through the plaster of the walls, the room was as spick and span as if under the charge of a finicky housewife. Old Campbell himself, bending over the cook stove, was as astonishing in his own way as the room. He had removed all trace of the day's smithing and fairly shone with cleanliness. His snow-white hair was carefully combed back from his wide forehead, his bushy chin-whiskers likewise showed signs of water and comb, and he was garbed from throat to ankles in a white cook's apron. He was cheerfully humming a dirge-like tune, and so occupied was he with his cookery that he scarcely so much as glanced at Toppy.

"Now then, lad; are you ready?" he asked presently.

"All ready, I guess," said Toppy, giving a final look at the table.

"You've forgot the bread," said Campbell, also looking. "You'll find it in yon tin box on the shelf. Lively, now." And before Toppy had dished out a loaf from the bread-box the old man had a huge platter of steak and twin bowls of potatoes and turnips steaming on the table.

"We will now say grace," said Campbell, seating himself after removing the big apron, and Toppy sat silent and amazed as the old man bowed his head and in his deep voice solemnly uttered thanks for the meal before him.

"Now then," he said briskly, raising his head and reaching for a fork as he ended, "fall to."

The meal was eaten without any more conversation than was necessary. When it was over, the blacksmith pushed his chair leisurely back from the table and looked across at Toppy with a quizzical smile.

"Well, lad," he rumbled, "what would ye say was the next thing to be done by oursel's?"

"Wash the dishes," said Toppy promptly,

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taking his cue from the conspicuous cleanliness of the room.

"Aye," said Campbell, nodding. "And as I cook the meal——"

"I'm elected dish-washer," laughed Toppy, springing up and taking a large dish-pan from the wall. He had often done his share of kitchen-work on hunting-trips, and soon he had the few dishes washed and dried and back on the shelf again. Campbell watched critically.

"Well enough," he said with an approving jerk of his head when the task was completed. "Your conscience should be easier now, lad; you've done something to pay for the meal you've eaten, which I'll warrant is something you've not often done."

"No," laughed Toppy, "it just happens that I haven't had to."

" 'Haven't had to'! " snorted Campbell in disgust. "Is that all the justification you have? Where's your pride? Are you a helpless infant that you're not ashamed to let other people stuff food into your mouth without doing anything for it? I suppose you've got money. And where came your money from? Your father? Your mother? No matter. Whoever it came from, they're the people who've been feeding you, but by the great smoked herring! If you stay wi' David Campbell you'll have a change, lad. Aye, you'll learn what it is to earn your bread in the sweat of your brow. And you'll bless the day you come here—no matter what the reason that made you come, and which I do not want to hear."

Toppy bowed courteously.

"I've got no come-back to that line of conversation, Mr. Campbell," he said good-naturedly. "Whenever anybody accuses me of being a bum with money I throw up my hands and plead guilty; you can't get an argument out of me with a corkscrew."

Old Campbell's grim face cracked in a genial smile as he rose and led the way to the corner containing the bookshelves.

"We will now step into the library," he chuckled. "Sit ye down."

He pushed one of the easy chairs toward Toppy, and from a cupboard under the reading-table drew a bottle of Scotch whisky of a celebrated brand. Toppy's whole being suddenly cried out for a drink as his eyes fell on the familiar four stars.

"Say when, lad," said Campbell, pouring into a generous glass. "Well?" He looked at Toppy in surprise as the glass filled up. Something had smitten Toppy like a blow between the eyes—— "How can nice boys like you throw themselves away?" And the pity of the girl as she had said it was large before him.

"Thanks," said Toppy, seating himself, "but I'm on the wagon."

The old smith looked up at him shrewdly from the corners of his eyes.

"Oh, aye!" he grunted. "I see. Well, by the puffs under your eyes ye have overdone it; and for fleeing the temptations of the world I know of no better place ye could go to than this. For it's certain neither temptations nor luxuries will be found in Hell Camp while the Snow-Burner's boss."

"Now you interest me," said Toppy grimly. "The Snow-Burner—Hell-Camp Reivers—Mr. Reivers—the boss. What kind of a human being is he, if he is human?"

CAMPBELL carefully mixed his whisky with hot water.

"You saw him manhandle Rosky?" he asked, seating himself opposite Toppy.

"Yes; but it wasn't manhandling; it was brute-handling, beast-handling."

"Aye," said the Scot sipping his drink. "So think I, too. But do you know what Reivers calls it? An enlightened man showing a human clod the error of his ways. Oh, aye; the Indians were smart when they named him the Snow-Burner. He does things that aren't natural."

"But who is he, or what is he? He's an educated man, obviously—'way above what a logging-boss ought to be. What do you know about him?"

"Little enough," was the reply. "Four year ago I were smithing in Elk Lake Camp over east of here, when Reivers came walking into camp. That was the first any white men had seen of him around these woods, though afterward we learned he'd lived long enough with the Indians to earn the name of the Snow-Burner.

"It were January, and two feet of snow on the level, and fifty below. Reivers came walking into camp, and the nearest human habitation were forty mile away. 'Red Pat' Haney were foreman—a man-killer with the devil's own temper; and him Reivers dee-liberately set himself to arouse. A week after his coming, this same Reivers had every man in camp looking up to him, except Red Pat.

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"And Reivers drove Pat half mad with that contemptuous smile of his, and Pat pulled a gun; and Reivers says, 'That's what I was waiting for,' and broke Pat's bones with his bare hands and laid him up. Then, says he, 'This camp is going on just the same as if nothing had happened, and I'm going to be boss.' That was all there was to it; he's been a boss ever since."

"And you don't know where he came from? Or anything else about him?"

"Oh, he's from England—an Oxford man, for that matter," said Campbell. "He admitted that much once when we were argufying. He'll be here soon; he comes to quarrel with me every evening."

"Why does an Oxford man want to be 'way out here bossing a logging-camp?" grumbled Toppy.

Campbell nodded.

"Aye, I asked that of him once," he said. " 'Though it's none of your business,' says he, 'I'll tell you. I got tired of living where people snivel about laws concerning right and wrong,' says he, 'instead of acknowledging that there is only one law ruling life—that the strong can master the weak.' That is Mr. Reivers' religion. He was only worshipping his strange gods when he broke Rosky's leg, for he considers Rosky a weaker man than himself, and therefore 'tis his duty to break him to his own will."

"A fine religion!" snapped Toppy. "And how about his dealings with you?"

The Scot smiled grimly.

"I'm the best smith he ever had," he replied, "and I've warned him that I'd consider it a duty under my religion to shoot him through the head did he ever attempt to force his creed upon me." He paused and held up a finger. "Hist, lad. That's him coming noo. He's come for his regular evening's mouthfu' of conversation."

Toppy found himself sitting up and gripping the arms of his chair as Reivers came swinging in. He eagerly searched the foreman's countenance for a sign to indicate whether Tilly, the squaw, had communicated the conversation she had heard between Toppy and Miss Pearson, but if she had there was nothing to indicate it in Reivers' expression or manner. His self-mastery awoke a sullen rage in Toppy. He felt himself to be a boy beside Reivers.

"Good evening, gentlemen," greeted Reivers lightly, pulling a chair up to the reading-table. "It is a pleasure to find intelligent society after having spent the last hour handling the broken leg of a miserable brute on two legs. Bah! The whisky, Scotty, please. I wonder what miracles of misbreeding have been necessary to turn out alleged human beings with bodies so hideous compared to what the human body should be. Treplin, if you or I stripped beside those Hunkies the only thing we'd have in common would be the number of our legs and arms."

He drew toward him a tumbler which Campbell had pushed over beside the bottle and, filling the glass three-quarters full, began to drink slowly at the powerful Scotch whisky as another man might sip at beer or light wine. Old Campbell rocked slowly to and fro in his chair.

" 'He that taketh up the sword shall perish by the sword,' " he quoted solemnly. "No man is a god to set himself up, lord over the souls and bodies of his fellows. They will put out your light for you one of these days, Mr. Reivers. Have care and treat them a little more like men."

Reivers smiled a quick smile that showed a mouthful of teeth as clean and white as a hound's.

"Let's have your opinion on the subject, Treplin," he said. "New opinions are always interesting, and Scotty repeats the same thing over and over again. What do you think of it? Do you think I can maintain my rule over those hundred and fifty clods out there in the stockade as I am ruling them, through the law of strength over weakness? Do you think one superior mind can dominate a hundred and fifty inferior organisms? Or do you think, with Scotty here, that the dregs can drag me down?"

Toppy shook his head. He was in no mood to debate abstract problems with Reivers.

"Count me out until I'm a little acquainted with the situation," he said. "I'm a stranger in a strange land. I've just dropped in—from almost another world you might say."

In a vain attempt to escape taking sides in what was evidently an old argument he hurriedly rattled off the story of his coming to Rail Head and thence to Hell Camp, omitting to mention, however, that it was Miss Pearson who was responsible for the latter part of his journey. Reivers smote his huge fist upon the table as Toppy finished.

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"That's the kind of a man for me!" he laughed. "Got tired of living the life of his class, and just stepped out of it. No explanations; no acknowledgment of obligations to anybody. Master of his own soul. To —— with the niceties of civilization! Treplin, you're a man after my own scheme of life; I did the same thing once—only I was sober.

"But let's get back to our subject. Here's the situation: This camp is on a natural townsite. There's water-power, ore and timber. To use the water-power we must build a dam; to use the timber we must get it to the saws. That takes labor, lots of it—muscle-and-bone labor. Labor is scarce up here. It is too far from the pigsties of towns. Men would come, work a few days, and go away. The purpose of the place would be defeated—unless the men are kept here at work.

"That's what I do. I keep them here. To do it I keep them locked up at night like the cattle they are. By day I have them guarded by armed man-killers—every one of my guards is a fugitive from man's silly laws, principally from the one which says, 'Thou shalt not kill.'

"But my best guard is Fear—by which I rule alike my guards and the poor brutes who are necessary to my purpose. There you are: a hundred and fifty of them, fearing and hating me, and I'm making them do as I please. No foolishness about laws, about order, about right or wrong. Just a hundred and fifty half-beasts and myself out here in the woods. As a man with a trained mind, do you think I can keep it up? Or do you think there is mental energy enough in that mess of human protoplasm to muster up nerve enough to put out my light, as Scotty puts it? It's a problem that furnishes interesting mental gymnastics."

HE PROPOUNDED the problem with absolutely no trace of personal interest. To judge by his manner, the matter of his life or death meant nothing to him. It was merely an interesting question on which to expend the energy fulminating in his mind. In his light-blue eyes there seemed to gleam the same impersonal brutality which had shown out when he so casually crippled Rosky.

"Oh, it's an impossible proposition, Reivers!" exploded Toppy, with the picture of the writhing Slav in his mind's eye. "You've got to consider right and wrong when dealing with human beings. It isn't natural; Nature won't stand it."

"Ah!" Reivers' eyes lighted up with intellectual delight. "That's an idea! Scotty, you hear? You've been talking about my perishing by the sword, but you haven't given any reason why. Treplin does. He says Nature will revolt, because my system is unnatural." He threw back his head and laughed coldly. "Rot, Treplin—silly, effeminate, bookish rot!" he roared. "Nature has respect only for the strong. It creates the weaker species merely to give the stronger food to remain strong on."

Old Scotty had been rocking furiously. Now he stopped suddenly and broke out into a furious Biblical denunciation of Reivers' system. When he stopped for breath after his first outbreak, Reivers with a few words and a cold smile egged him on. Toppy gladly kept his mouth shut. After an hour he yawned and arose from his chair.

"If you'll excuse me, I'll turn in," he said. "I'm too sleepy to listen or talk."

Without looking at him Reivers drew a book from his pocket and tossed it toward him.

"'Davis on Fractures'," he grunted. "Cram up on it tomorrow. There will be need of your help before long. Go on, Scotty; you were saying that a just retribution was Nature's law. Go on."

And Toppy rolled into his bunk, to lie wide awake, listening to the argument, marveling at the character of Reivers, and pondering over the strange situation he had fallen into. He scarcely thought of what Harvey Duncombe and the bunch would be thinking about his disappearance. His thoughts were mainly occupied with wondering why, of all the women he had seen, a slender little girl with golden hair should suddenly mean so much to him. Nothing of the sort ever had happened to him before. It was rather annoying. Could she ever have a good opinion of him?

Probably not. And even if she could, what about Reivers? Toppy was firmly convinced that the speech which Reivers had made to Miss Pearson was a false one. Reivers might have a great reputation for always keeping his word, but Toppy, after what he had seen and heard, would no more trust to his morals than those of a hungry bear. If Tilly, the squaw, told Reivers what she had heard, what then? Well, in that

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case they would soon know whether Reivers meant to keep his promise not to bother Miss Pearson with his attentions. Toppy set his jaw grimly at the thought of what might happen then. The mere thought of Reivers seemed to make his fists clench hard.

He lay awake for a long time with Reivers' voice, coldly bantering Campbell, constantly in his ears. When Reivers finally went away he fell asleep. Before his closed eyes was the picture of the girl as, in the morning, she had kicked up the snow and looked up at him with her eyes deliciously puckered from the sun; and in his memory was the stinging recollection that she had called him a "nice boy."

CHAPTER VIII

TOPPY WORKS

AT DAYLIGHT next morning began Toppy's initiation as a blacksmith's helper. For the next four days he literally earned his bread in the sweat of his brow, as Campbell had warned him he would. The dour old Scot took it as his religious duty to give his helper a severe introduction to the world of manual labor, and circumstances aided him in his aim.

Two dozen huge wooden sleighs had come from the "wood-butcher"—the camp carpenter-shop—to be fitted with cross-rods, brace-irons and runners. Out in the woods the ice-roads, carefully sprinkled each night, were alternately freezing and thawing, gradually approaching the solid condition which would mean a sudden call for sleighs to haul the logs, which lay mountain-high at the rollways, down to the river. One cold night and day now, and the call would come, and David Campbell was not the man to be found wanting—even if handicapped by a helper with hands as soft as a woman's.

Toppy had no knowledge or skill in the trade, but he had strength and quickness, and the thoughts of Reivers' masterfulness, and the "nice boy" in the mouth of the girl, spurred him to the limit. The heavy sledge-work fell to his lot as a matter of course. A twenty-pound sledge was a plaything in Toppy's hand—for the first fifteen minutes.

After that the hammer seemed to increase progressively in weight, until at the end of the first day's work Toppy would gladly have credited the statement that it weighed a ton. Likewise the heavy runner-irons, which he lifted with ease on the anvil in the morning, seemed to grow heavier as the day grew older. Had Toppy been in the splendid condition that had helped him to win his place on the All-American eleven four years before, he might have gone through the cruel period of breaking-in without faltering. But four years of reckless living had taken their toll. The same magnificent frame and muscles were there; the great heart and grit and sand likewise. But there was something else there, too; the softening, weakening traces of decomposed alcohol in organs and tissues, and under the strain of the terrific pace which old Campbell set for Toppy, abused organs, fibers and nerves began to creak and groan, and finally called out, "Halt!"

It was only Toppy's grit—the "great heart" that had made him a champion—and the desire to prove his strength before Reivers that kept him at work after the first day. His body had quit cold. He had never before undergone such expenditure of muscular energy, not even in the fiercest game of his career. That was play; this was torture. On the second morning his body shrank involuntarily from the spectacle of the torturing sledge, anvil and irons, but pride and grit drove him on with set jaw and hard eyes. Quit? Well, hardly. Reivers walked around the camp and smiled as he saw Toppy sweating, and Toppy swore and went on.

On the third day old Campbell looked at him with curiosity.

"Well, lad, have ye had enough?" he asked, smiling pityingly. "Ye can get a job helping the cookee if you find man's work too hard for ye."

Toppy, between clenched teeth, swore savagely. He was so tired that he was sick. The toxins of fatigue, aided and abetted by the effects of hard living, had poisoned him until his feet and brain felt as heavy as lead. It hurt him to move and it hurt him to think. He was groggy, all but knocked out; but something within him held him doggedly at the tasks which were surely mastering him.

That night he dragged himself to bed without waiting for supper. In the morning Campbell was amazed to see him tottering toward his accustomed place in the shop; for old Campbell had set a pace that had racked his own iron, work-tried body, and

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he had allowed Toppy two days in which to cry enough.

"Hold up a little, lad," he grumbled. "We're away ahead of our job. There's no need laying yourself up. Take you a rest."

"You go to ——!" exploded the overwrought Toppy. "Take a rest yourself if you need one; I don't."

He was working on his nerve now, flogging his weary arms and body to do his bidding against their painful protests; and he worked like a madman, fearing that if he came to a halt the run-down machinery would refuse to start afresh.

It was near evening when a teamster drove up with a broken sleigh from which Campbell and the man strove in vain to tear the twisted runner. Reivers from the steps of the store looked on, sneering. Toppy, his lips drawn back with pain and weariness, laughed shrilly at the efforts of the pair.

"Yank it off!" he cried contemptuously. "Yank it off—like this."

He drove a pry-iron under the runner and heaved. It refused to budge. Toppy gathered himself under the pry and jerked with every ounce of energy in him. The runner did not move. His left ankle felt curiously weak under the awful strain. Across the way he heard Reivers laugh shortly. Furiously Toppy jerked again; the runner flew into the air. Toppy felt the weak ankle sag under him in unaccountable fashion, and he fell heavily on his side and lay still.

"Sprained his ankle," grunted the teamster, as they bore him to his bunk. "I knew something had to give. No man ever was made to stand up under that lift."

"But I yanked it off!" groaned Toppy, half wild with pain. "I didn't quit—I yanked the darn thing off!"

"Aye," said old Campbell, "you yanked it off, lad. Lay still now till we have off your shoe."

"And holy smoke!" said the teamster. "What a yank! Hey! Whoap! Holy, red-roaring—he's gone and fainted!"

This latter statement was not precisely true. Toppy had not fainted; he had suddenly succumbed to the demands of complete exhaustion. The overdriven, tired-out organs, wrenched and abused tissues, and fatigue-deadened nerves suddenly had cried, "Stop!" in a fashion that not all of Toppy's will-power could deny. One instant he lay flat on his back on the blankets of his bunk, wide awake, with Campbell tugging at the laces of his shoes; the next—a mighty sigh of peace heaved his big chest. Toppy had fallen asleep.

It was not a natural sleep, nor a peaceful one. The racked muscles refused to be still; the raw nerve-centers refused to soothe themselves in the peace of complete senselessness. His whole body twitched. Toppy tossed and groaned. He awoke some time in the night with his stomach crying for food.

"Drink um," said a voice somewhere, and a sturdy arm went under his head and a bowl containing something savory and hot was held against his lips.

"Hello, Tilly," chuckled Toppy deliriously. It was quite in keeping with things that Tilly, the squaw, should be holding his head and feeding him in the middle of the night. He drank with the avidity of a man parched and starving, and the hot broth pleasantly soothed him as it ran down his throat.

"More!" he said, and Tilly gave him more.

"Good fellow, Tilly," he murmured. "Good medicine. Who told you?"

"Snow-Burner," grunted Tilly, laying his head on the pillow. "He send me. Sleep um now."

"Sure," sighed Toppy, and promptly fell back into his moaning, feverish slumber.

CHAPTER IX

A FRESH START

WHEN he awoke again to clear consciousness, it was morning. The sun which came in through the east window shone in his eyes and lighted up the room. Toppy lay still. He was quite content to lie so. An inexplicable feeling of peace and comfort ruled in every inch of his being. The bored, heavy feeling with which for a long time past he had been in the custom of facing a new day was absolutely gone. His tongue was cool; there was none of the old heavy blood-pressure in his head; his nerves were absolutely quiet. Something had happened to him. Toppy was quite conscious of the change, though he was too comfortable to do more than accept his peaceful condition as a fact.

"Ho, hum! I feel like a new man," he murmured drowsily. "I wonder—ow!"

He had stretched himself leisurely and

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thus became conscious that his left ankle was bandaged and sore. His cry brought old Campbell into the room—Campbell solemnly arrayed in a long-tailed suit of black, white collar, black tie, spick and span, with beard and hair carefully washed and combed.

"Hello!" gasped Toppy sleepily. "Where you going—funeral?"

" 'Tis the Sabbath," said Campbell reverently, as he came to the side of the bunk. "And how do ye feel the day, lad?"

"Fine!" said Toppy. "Considering that I had my ankle sprained last evening."

The Scot eyed him closely.

"So 'twas last evening ye broke your ankle, was it?" he asked cannily.

"Why, sure," said Toppy. "Yesterday was Saturday, wasn't it? We were cleaning up the week's work. Why, what are you looking at me like that for?"

"Aye," said Campbell, his Sunday solemnity forbidding the smile that strove to break through. "Yesterday was Saturday, but 'twas not the Saturday you sprained your leg. A week ago Saturday that was, lad, and ye've lain here in a fever, out of your head, ever since. Do you mind naught of the whole week?"

Toppy looked up at Campbell in silence for a long time.

"Scotty, if you have to play jokes——"

"Jokes!" spluttered Campbell, aghast. "Losh, mon! Didna I tell ye 'twas the Sabbath? No, 'tis no joke, I assure you. You did more than sprain your ankle when ye tripped that Saturday. You collapsed completely. Lad, you were in poor condition when you came to camp, and had I known it I would not have broken you in so hard. But you're a good man, lad; the best man I ever saw, if you keep in condition. And do you really feel good again?"

"Why, I feel like a new man," said Toppy. "I feel as if I'd had a course of baths at Hot Springs."

Campbell nodded.

"The Snow-Burner said ye would. It's Tilly he's had doctoring ye. She's been feeding you some Indian concoction and keeping ye heated till your blankets were wet through. Oh, you've had scandalous good care, lad; Reivers to set your ankle, Tilly to doctor ye Indian-wise, and Miss Pearson and Reivers to drop in together now and anon to see how ye were standing the gaff. No wonder ye came through all right!"

The room seemed suddenly to grow dark for Toppy. Reivers again—Reivers dropping in to look at him as he lay there helpless on his back. Reivers in the position of the master again; *and the girl with him!* Toppy impatiently threw off his covering.

"Gimme my clothes, Scotty," he demanded, swinging himself to the edge of the bunk. "I'm tired of lying here on my back."

Campbell silently handed over his clothing. Toppy was weak, but he succeeded in dressing himself and in tottering over to a chair.

"So Miss Pearson came over here, did she?" he asked thoughtfully. "And with Reivers?"

"Aye," said Scotty dryly. "With Reivers. He has a way with the women, the Snow-Burner has."

Toppy debated a moment; then he broke out and told Campbell all about how Reivers had deceived Miss Pearson into coming to Hell Camp. The old man listened with tightly pursed lips. As Toppy concluded he shook his head sorrowfully.

"Poor lass, she's got a hard path before her then," he said. "If, as you say, she does not wish to care for Reivers."

"What do you mean?"

"Well," said Campbell slowly, "ye'll be understanding by this time that the Snow-Burner is no ordinar' man?"

"He's a fiend—a savage with an Oxford education!" exploded Toppy.

"He is—the Snow-Burner," said Campbell with finality. "You know what he is toward men. Toward women—he's worse!"

"Good Heavens!"

"Not that he is a woman-chaser. No; 'tis not his way. But—yon man has the strongest will in him I've ever seen in mortal man, and 'tis the will women bow to." He pulled his whiskers nervously and looked away. "I've known him four year now, and no woman in that time that he has set his will upon but in the end has—has followed him like a slave."

Toppy's fists clenched, and he joyed to find that in spite of his illness his muscles went hard.

"Ye've seen Tilly," continued Scotty with averted eyes. "Ye'll not be so blind that ye've not observed that she's no ordinar' squaw. Well, three years ago Tilly was teacher in the Chippewa Indian School—thin and straight—a Carlisle graduate and

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all. She met Reivers, and shunned him—at first. Reivers did not chase her. 'Tis not his way. But he bent his will upon her, and the poor girl left her life behind her and followed him, and kept following him, until ye see her as she is now. She would cut your throat or nurse ye as she did, no matter which, did he but command her. And she's not been the only one, either. Nor have the rest of them been red."

"The swine!" muttered Toppy.

"More wolf than swine, lad. Perhaps more tiger than wolf. I don't think Reivers intends to break his word to yon lass. But I suspect that he won't have to. No; as it it looks now, he won't. Given the opportunity to put his will upon her and she'll change her mind—like the others."

"He's a beast, that's what he is!" said Toppy angrily. "And any woman who would fall for him would get no more than she deserves, even if she's treated like Tilly. Why, anybody can see that the man's instincts are all wrong. Right in an animal perhaps, but wrong in a human being. The right kind of women would shun him like poison."

"I dunno," said Campbell, rubbing his chin. "Yon lass over in the office is as sweet and womanly a little lass as I've seen sin' I was a lad. And yet—look ye but out of the window, lad!"

TOPPY looked out of the window in the direction in which Campbell pointed. The window commanded a view of the gate to the stockade. Reivers was standing idly before the gate. Miss Pearson was coming toward him. As she approached he carelessly turned his head and looked her over from head to foot. From where he sat Toppy could see her smile. Then Reivers calmly turned his back upon her, and the smile on the girl's face died out. She stood irresolute for a moment, then turned and went slowly back toward the office, glancing occasionally over her shoulder toward the gate. Reivers did not look, but when she was out of sight he began to walk slowly toward the blacksmith-shop.

"Bah!" Toppy turned his eyes from the window in mingled anger and disgust. He sat for a moment with a multitude of emotions working at his heart. Then he laughed bitterly.

"Well, well, well!" he mocked. "You'd expect that from a squaw, but not from a white woman."

"Mr. Reivers is a remarkable man," said Campbell, shaking his head.

"Sure," said Toppy, "and it's a mistake to look for a remarkable woman up here in the woods."

"I dunno." The smith looked a little hurt. "I dunno about that, lad. Yon lass seems remarkably sweet and ladylike to me."

"Sure," sneered Toppy, pointing his thumb toward the gate. "That looked like it, didn't it?"

"As for that, you've heard what I've told you about the Snow-Burner and women," said Campbell sorrowfully. "He has a masterful way with them."

"A fine thing to be masterful over a little blonde fool like that!"

Campbell scowled.

"Even though you have no respect for the lass," he said curtly, "I see no reason why you should put it in words."

"Why not? Why shouldn't I, or any one else, put it in words after that?" Toppy fairly shouted the words. "She's made the thing public herself. She came creeping up to him right out where anybody who was looking could see her, and there won't be a man in camp tomorrow but'll have heard that she's fallen for Reivers. Apparently she doesn't care; so why should I, or you, or anybody else? Reivers has got a masterful way with women! Ha, ha! Let it go at that. It's none of my business, that's a cinch."

"No," agreed Campbell; "not if you talk that way, it's none of your business; that's sure."

Toppy could have struck him for the emphatic manner in which he uttered the words. But Toppy was beginning to learn to control himself and he merely gritted his teeth. The sudden stab which he had felt in his heart at the sight of the girl and Reivers had passed. In one flash there had been overthrown the fine structure which he had built about her in his thoughts. He had placed her high above himself. For some unknown reason he had looked up to her from the first moment he had seen her. He had not considered himself worthy of her good opinion. And here she was flaunting her subservience to Reivers—to a cold, sneering brute—before the eyes of the whole camp!

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The rage and pain at the sight of the pair had come and gone, and that was all over. And now Toppy to his surprise found that it didn't make much difference. The girl, and what she was, what she thought of him, or of Reivers, no longer were of prime importance to him. He didn't care enough about that now to give her room in his thoughts.

Reivers was what mattered now—Reivers, with his air of contemptuous dominance; Reivers, who had looked on and laughed when Toppy was tugging at the runner of the broken sleigh. That laugh seemed to ring in Toppy's ears. It challenged him even as it contemned him. It said, "I am your master; doubt it if you dare;" even as Reivers' cold smile had said the same to Rosky and the huddled bunch of Slavs.

The girl—that was past. But Reivers had roused something deeper, something older, something fiercer than the feelings which had begun to stir in Toppy at the sight of the girl. Man—raw, big-thewed, world-old and always new man—had challenged unto man. And man had answered. The petty considerations of life were stripped away. Only one thing was of importance. The world to Toppy Treplin had become merely a place for Reivers the Snow-Burner and himself to settle the question which had cried for settlement since the moment when they first looked into each other's eyes: Which was the better man?

Toppy smiled as he stretched himself and noted the new life that seemed to have come into his body. He knew what it meant. That strenuous siege of work and a week of fevered sweating had driven the alcohol out of his system. He was making a fresh start. A few weeks at the anvil now, and he would be in better shape than at any time since leaving school. He set his jaw squarely and heaved his big arms high above his head.

"Well, Treplin," came an unmistakable voice from the doorway, "you're looking strenuous for a man just off the sickbed."

CHAPTER X

THE DUEL BEGINS

"I'M FEELING pretty good, thank you, Reivers," said Toppy quietly, though the voice of the man had thrilled him with the challenge in it. He turned his head slowly and looked up from his chair at Reivers with an expression of great serenity. The Big Game had begun between them, and Toppy was an expert at keeping his play hidden.

"Much obliged for strapping up my ankle, Reivers," he said. "Silly-thing, to sprain an ankle; but thanks to your expert bandaging it'll be ready to walk on soon."

"It wasn't a bad sprain," said Reivers, moving up and standing in front of him. That was Reivers all through. Toppy was sitting; Reivers was standing, looking down on him, his favorite pose. The black anger boiled in Toppy's heart, but by his expression one could read only that he was a grateful young man.

"No, it wasn't a bad sprain," continued Reivers, his upper lip lifting in its customary smile of scorn, "but—a man who attempts such heavy lifts must have no weak spot in him."

Toppy twisted himself into a more comfortable position in his chair and smiled.

"'Attempts' is hardly the right word there, Reivers. Pardon me for differing with you," he laughed. "You may remember that the attempt was a success."

A glint of amusement in Reivers' cold eyes showed that he appreciated that something more weighty than a mere question of words lay beneath that apparently casual remark. For an instant his eyes narrowed, as if trying to see beyond Toppy's smile and read what lay behind, but Toppy's good poker-face now stood him in good stead, and he looked blandly back at Reivers' peering eyes and continued to smile. Reivers laughed.

"Quite right, Treplin; obliged to you for correcting me," he said. "A chap gets rusty out here, where none of the laws of speech are observed. I'll depend upon you to bring me back to form again—later on. Is your ankle really feeling strong?"

For answer Toppy rose and stood on it.

"Well, well!" laughed Reivers. "Then Miss Pearson's sympathy was all wasted. What's the matter, Treplin? Aren't you glad to hear that charming young lady is enough interested in you to hunt me up and ask me to step in and see how you are this morning?"

"Not particularly," replied Toppy, although he was forced to admit to himself a glow at this explanation of the girl's conversation with Reivers.

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"What are you interested in?" said Reivers suddenly.

Toppy looked up at him shrewdly.

"I tell you what I'd like to do, Reivers; I'd like to learn the logging-business—learn how to run a camp like this—run it efficiently, I mean."

"Worthy ambition," came the instant reply, "and you've come to the right school. How fortunate for you that you fell into this camp! You might have got into one where the boss had foolish ideas. You might even have fallen in with a humanitarian. Then you'd never have learned how to make men do things for you, and consequently you'd never have learned to run a camp efficiently.

"Thank your lucky stars, Treplin, that you fell in with me. I'll rid you of the silly little ideas about right and wrong that books and false living have instilled in your head. I believe you've got a good head—almost as good as mine. If, for instance, you were in a situation where it was your life or the other fellow's, you'd survive. That's the proof of a good head. Want to learn the logging-business, do you? Good! Is your ankle strong enough for you to get around on?"

Toppy took an ax-handle from the corner and, using it as a cane, hobbled around the room.

"Yes, it will stand up all right," he said. "What's the idea?"

"Come with me," laughed Reivers, swinging toward the door. "We're just in time for lesson number one on how to run a camp efficiently."

CHAPTER XI

"HELL-CAMP" COURT

AS REIVERS led the way out of the shop Toppy saw that Miss Pearson was standing in the door of the office across the way. He saw also that she was looking at him. He did not respond to her look nor volunteer a greeting, but deliberately looked away from her as he kept pace with Reivers, who was setting the way toward the gate of the stockade.

It was a morning such as the one when, back in Rail Head, the girl had kicked up the snow and said to him, "Isn't it glorious?" But since then Toppy felt bitterly that he had grown so much older, so disillusioned, that never again would he be guilty of the tender feelings that the girl had evoked that morning. The sun was bright, the crisp air invigorating, and the blood bounded gloriously through his young body. But Toppy did not wax enthusiastic.

He was grimly glad of the mighty stream of life that he felt surging within him; he would have use for all the might later on. But no more. The world was a harder, a less pretty place than he, in his inexperience, had fancied it before coming to Hell Camp.

"What's this lesson?" he asked gruffly of Reivers. "What are you going to show me?"

"A little secret in the art of keeping brute-men satisfied with the place in life which a superior mind has allotted to them," replied Reivers. "What is the first need of the brute? Food, of course. And the second is—fight. Give the lower orders of mankind, which is the kind to use in running a camp efficiently, plenty of food and fight, and the problem of restlessness is solved.

"That's history, Treplin, as you know. If these foolish, timid capitalists and leaders of men who are searching their petty souls for a remedy to combat the ravages of the modern disease called Socialism only would read history intelligently, they would find the remedy made to order. Fight! War! Give the lower brutes war; let 'em get out and slaughter one another, and they'd soon forget their pitiful, clumsy attempts to think for themselves. Give them guns with a little sharp steel on the end of the barrel, turn them loose on each other—any excuse would do—and they'd soon be so busy driving said steel into one another's thick bodies that the leaders could slip the yoke back on their necks and get 'em under hand again, where they belong.

"And they'd be happier, too, because a man-brute has got to have so much fighting, or what he calls his brain begins to trouble him; and then he imagines he has a soul and is otherwise unhappy. If there is fighting, or the certain prospect of fighting, there's no alleged thinking. There's the solution of all difficulties with the lower orders. Of course you've noticed how perfectly contented and happy the men in this camp are?" he laughed, turning suddenly on Toppy.

"Yes," said Toppy. "Especially Rosky and his bunch."

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The Snow-Burner smiled appreciatively.

"Rosky, poor clod, hadn't had any fighting. I'd overlooked him. Had I known that thoughts had begun to trouble his poor, half-ox brain, I'd have given him some fighting, and he'd have been as content for the next few weeks as a man who—who's just been through delirium tremens.

"He had no object in life, you see. If he'd had a good enemy to hate and fight, he wouldn't have been troubled by thoughts, and consequently he wouldn't now be lying in his bunk with his leg in splints.

"There is the system in a nutshell—give a man an enemy to hate and wish to destroy, and he won't be any trouble to you during working-hours or after. That's what I do—pick out the ones who might get restless and set them to hating each other. And now," he concluded, as they reached the gate and passed through, "you'll have a chance to see how it works out."

The big gate, opened for them by two armed guards, swung shut behind them, and Toppy once more looked around the enclosure in which he had had his first glimpse of the Snow-Burner's system of handling the men under him. The place this morning, however, presented a different, a more impressive scene. It was all but filled with a mass of rough-clad, rough-moving, rough-talking male humanity.

Perhaps a hundred and fifty men were waiting in the enclosure. For the greater part they were of the dark, thick and heavily clumsy type that Toppy had learned to include under the general title of Bohunk; but here and there over the dark, ox-like faces rose the fair head of a tall man of some Northern breed. Slavs comprised the bulk of the gathering; the Scandinavians, Irish, Americans—the "white men," as they called themselves—were conspicuous only by contrast and by the manner in which they isolated themselves from the Slavs.

And between the two breeds there was not much room for choice. For while the faces of the Slavs were heavy with brute stupidity and malignity, those of the North-bred men reeked with fierceness, cruelty and crime. The Slavs were at Hell Camp because they were tricked into coming and forced to remain under shotgun rule; the others were there mostly because sheriffs found it unsafe and unprofitable to seek any man whom the Snow-Burner had in his camp. They were "hiding out." Criminals, the majority of them, they preyed on the stupid Slavs as a matter of course; and this situation Reivers had utilized, as he put it, "to keep his men content."

Though there was a gulf of difference between the extreme types of the crowd, Toppy soon realized that just now their expressions were strangely alike. They were all impatient and excited. The excitement seemed to run in waves; one man moved and others moved with him. One threw up his head and others did likewise. Their faces were expectant and cruel. It was like the milling of excited cattle, only worse.

"Come along, Treplin," said Reivers, and led the way toward the center of the enclosure. The noises of the crowd, the talking, the short laughter, the shuffling, ceased instantly at his appearance. The crowd parted before him as before some natural force that brushed all men aside. It opened up even to the center of the yard, and then Toppy saw whither Reivers was leading.

On the bare ground was roped off a square which Toppy, with practised eye, saw was the regulation twenty-four-foot prize-fight ring. Rough, unbarked tamarack poles formed the corner-posts of the ring, and the ropes were heavy wire logging-cable. A yard from one side of the ring stood a table with a chair upon it. Reivers, with a careless, "Take a seat on the table and keep your eyes open," stepped easily upon the table, seated himself in the chair and looked amused as the men instinctively turned their faces up toward him.

"Well, men," he said in a voice which reached like cold steel into the far corners of the enclosure, "court is open. The first case is Jan Torta and his brother Mikel against Bill Sheedy, whom they accuse of stealing ninety-eight dollars from them while they slept."

As he spoke the names two young Slavs, clumsy but strongly built, their heavy faces for once alight with hate and desire for revenge, pushed close to one side of the ring, while on the other side a huge red-haired Celt, bloated and evil of face, stepped free of the crowd.

"Bill stole the money, all right," continued Reivers, without looking at any of them. "He had the chance, and being a sneak thief by nature he took it. That's all

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right. The Torta boys had the money; now Bill's got it. The question is: Is Bill man enough to keep it? That's what we're going to settle now. He's got to show that he's a better man than the two fellows he took the money from. If he isn't, he's got to give up the money, or the two can have him to do what they want to with him. All right, boys; get 'em started there."

At his brisk order four men whom Toppy had seen around camp as guards stepped forward, two to Sheedy, two to the Torta brothers, and proceeded first to search them for weapons, next to strip them to the waist. Sheedy hung back.

"Not two av um tuh wanst, Mr. Reivers?" he asked humbly. "One after deh udder it oughta be; two tuh wanst, that ain't no way."

"And why not, Bill?" asked Reivers gently. "You took it from both of them, didn't you? Then keep it against both of 'em, Bill. Throw 'em in there, boys!"

Toppy looked around at the rows of eager faces that were pressing toward the ringside. Prize-fights he had witnessed by the score. He had even participated in one or two for a lark, and the brute lust that springs into the eyes of spectators was no stranger to him. But never had he seen anything like this. There was none of the restraint imposed upon the human countenance by civilization in the fierce faces that gathered about this ring.

Out of the dull eyes the primitive killing-animal showed unrestrained, unashamed. No dilettante interest in strength or skill here; merely the bare bloodthirsty desire to see a fellow-animal fight and bleed. Up above, the sky was clean and blue; the rough log walls shut out the rest of the world; the breathing of a mob of excited men was the only sound upon the quiet Sunday air. It was the old arena again; the merciless, gore-hungry crowd; the maddened gladiators; and upon the chair on the table, Reivers, lord of it all, the king-man, to whom it was all but an idle moment's play.

Reivers, above it all, untouched by it all, and yet directing and swaying it all as his will listed. Laws, rules, teachings, creeds—all were discarded. Primitive force had for the nonce been given back its rule. And over it, and controlling it, as well as each of the maddened eight-score men around the ring—Reivers.

And so thoroughly did Reivers dominate the whole affair that Toppy, sitting carelessly on the edge of the table, was conscious of it, and knew that he, too, felt instinctively inclined to do as the men did—to look to Reivers for a sign before daring to speak or make a move. The Snow-Burner was in the saddle. It wasn't natural, but every phase of the situation emanated from his master-man's will. It was even his wish that Toppy should sit thus at his feet and look on, and his wish was gratified.

But it was well that the visor of Toppy's cap hid his eyes, else Reivers might have wondered at the look that flashed up at him from them.

"Throw 'em in!" snapped Reivers, and the handlers thrust the three combatants, stripped to the waists but wearing calked lumberjack shoes, through the ropes.

A cry went up to the sky from a hundred and fifty throats around the ringside—a cry that had close kinship with the joyous, merciless "*Au-rr-ruh*" of a wolf about to make its kill. Then an instant's silence as the rudely handled fighters came to their feet and faced for action. Then another hideous yelp rent the still air; the fighters had come together!

"Queer ring-costumes, eh, Treplin?" came Reivers' voice mockingly. "Our own rules; the feet as well as the hands. Lord, what oxen!"

The two Slavs had sprung upon their despoiler like two maddened cattle. Sheedy, rushing to meet them, head down, swung right and left overhand; and with a mighty smacking of hard fist on naked flesh, one Torta rolled on the ground while his brother stopped in his tracks, his arms pressed to his middle. The crowd bellowed.

"Yes, I knew Sheedy had been a pug," said Reivers judicially.

Sheedy deliberately took aim and swung for the jaw of the man who had not gone down. The Slav instinctively ducked his head, and the blow, slashing along his jaw-bone, tore loose his ear. Half stunned, he dropped to his knees, and Sheedy stepped back to poise for a killing kick. But now the man who had been knocked down first was on his feet, and with the scream of a wounded animal he hurled himself through the air and went down, his arms close-locked around Sheedy's right leg. Sheedy staggered. The ring became a little hell of distorted human speech. Sheedy bellowed horrible curses as he beat to a pulp the face

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that sought to bury itself in his thigh; his assailant screeched in Slavish terror; and the bull-like roar of his brother, rising to his feet with cleared senses and springing into the battle, intermingled with both. Sheedy's red face went pale.

Around the ringside the faces of the Slavs shone with relief. The fight was going their way; they roared encouragement and glee in their own guttural tongue. The others —Irish, Americans, Scandinavians—rooting for Sheedy only because he was of their breed, were silent.

"Hang tough, Bill," said one man quietly; and then in a second the slightly superior brains in Sheedy's head had turned the battle. Like a flash he dropped flat on his back as his fresh assailant reached out to grip him. The furious Slav followed him helplessly in the fall; and a single gruff, appreciative shout came from the few "white men."

For they had seen, even as the Slav stumbled, Bill Sheedy's left leg shoot up like a catapult, burying the calked shoe to the ankle in the man's soft middle and flinging him to one side, a shuddering, senseless wreck. The man with his arms around Sheedy's leg looked up and saw. He was alone now, alone against the big man who had knocked him down with such ease. Toppy saw the man's mouth open and his face go yellow.

"Na, na, na!" he cried piteously, as Sheedy's blows again rained upon him. "I give up, give up, give up!"

He tried to bury his face in Bill's thigh; and Bill, mad with success, strove to pound him loose.

"Kill him, Bill!" said one of the Irishmen quietly. "You got him now; kill him."

"Stop." Reivers did not raise his voice. He seemed scarcely interested. Yet the roars around the ring died down. Sheedy stopped a blow half delivered and dropped his arms. The Slav released his clawlike hold and ran, sobbing, toward his prostrate brother.

"All right, Bill; you keep the money—for all them," said Reivers. "Clear out the ring, boys, and get that other pair in there."

THE guards, springing into the ring as if under a lash, picked up the senseless man and thrust him like a sack of grain through the ropes and on to the ground at the feet of a group of his countrymen. Toppy saw these pick the man up and bear him away. The man's head hung down limply and dragged on the ground, and a thin stream of blood ran steadily out of one side of his mouth. His brother followed, loudly calling him by name.

"Very efficacious, that left leg of Bill's; eh, Treplin?" said Reivers lightly. "Bill was the superior creature there. He had the wit and will to survive in a crisis; therefore he is entitled to the rewards of the superior over the inferior, which in this case means the ninety-eight dollars which the Torta boys once had. That's justice—natural justice for you, Treplin; and all the fumbling efforts of the lawmakers who've tried through the ages to reduce life to a pen-and-paper basis haven't been able to change the old rule one bit.

"I'll admit that courts and all the fakery that goes with them have reduced the thing to a battle of brains, but after all it's the same old battle; the stronger win and hold. And," he concluded, waving his hand at the crowd, "you'll admit that Bill and those Torta boys wouldn't be at their best in a contest of intelligence."

Toppy refused Reivers the pleasure of seeing how the brutality of the affair disgusted him.

"Why don't you follow the thing out to its logical conclusion?" he said carelessly. "The thing isn't settled as long as the Torta boys can possibly make reprisals. To be a consistent savage you'd have to let 'em go to it until one had killed the other. But even you don't dare to do that, do you, Reivers?"

Reivers laughed, but the look that he bent on Toppy's bland face indicated that he was a trifle puzzled.

"Then you wouldn't be running the camp efficiently, Treplin," he said. "It wouldn't make any difference if they were all Tortas; but Bill's a valuable man. He furnishes some one a bellyfull of hating and fighting every week. No; I wouldn't have Bill killed for less than two hundred dollars. He's one of my best antidotes for the disease of discontent."

The guards now had pulled two other men up to the ropes and were searching and stripping them. Toppy stared at the disparity in the sizes of the men as the clothes were pulled off them. One stood up strong and straight, the muscles bulging big beneath his dark skin, his neck short and

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heavy, his head cropped and round. He wore a small, upturned mustache and carried himself with a certain handy air that indicated his close acquaintance with ring-events. The other man was short and dark, obviously an Italian; the skin of his body was a sickly white, his face olive green. He stood crouched, and beneath his ragged beard two teeth gleamed, like the fangs of a snarling dog.

"Antonio, the Knife-Expert, and Mahmout, the Strangling Bulgarian," announced Reivers laughingly. "Tony tried to stick Mahmout because of a little lady back in Rail Head, and made such a poor job of it that Mahmout has offered to meet him in the ring; Tony with his knife, Mahmout with his wrestling-tricks. Start 'em off."

The Bulgarian was under the ropes and upright in the ring before the Italian had started. He was in his stocking-feet, and despite the clumsiness of his build he moved with a quickness and ease that told of the fine coördination of the effective athlete. When the Italian entered the ring he held his right hand behind his back, and in the hand gleamed the six-inch blade of a wicked-looking stiletto.

A shiver ran along Toppy's spine, but he continued to play the game.

"Evidently Mahmout isn't a valuable man; you don't care what happens to him," he said.

"Not particularly," replied Reivers seriously. "He's a good man on the rollways—nothing extra. Still, I hardly believe Tony can kill him—not this time, at least."

The faces around the ring grew fiercer now. Growled curses and exclamations came through clenched teeth. Here was the spectacle that the brute-spirit hungered for—the bare, living flesh battling for life against the merciless, gleaming steel.

The big Bulgarian moved neatly forward, bent over at the waist, his strong arms extended, hands open before him in the practised wrestler's guard and attack. His feet did not leave the ground as he sidled forward, and his eyes never moved from the Italian's right arm. The latter, snarling and panting, retreated slightly, then began to circle carefully, his small eyes searching for the opening through which he could leap in and drive home his steel.

The Bulgarian turned with him, his guard always before him, as a bull turns its head to face the circling wolf. Without a sound the knife-man suddenly stopped and lunged a sweeping slash at the menacing hands. Mahmout, grasping for a hold on hand or wrist, caught the tip of the blade in his palm, and a slow bellow of rage shook him as he saw the blood flow. But he did not lower his guard nor take his eyes from his opponent.

The Italian retreated and circled again. A horrible sneer distorted his face, and the knife flashed in the sunlight as he slashed it to and fro before the other's hands. The crowd growled its appreciation. Three times Antonio leaped forward, slashed, and leaped back again; and each time the blood flowed from Mahmout's slashed fingers. But the wrestler's guard never lowered nor did he falter in his set plan of battle. He was working to get his man into a corner.

The Italian soon saw this and, leaping nimbly sidewise, lunged for Mahmout's ribs. The right arm of the Bulgarian dropped in time to save his life, but the knife, deflected from its fatal aim, ripped through the top muscles of his back for six inches. The mob roared at the fresh blood, but Mahmout was working silently. In his spring the Italian had only leaped toward another corner of the ring.

Mahmout leaped suddenly toward him. Antonio, stabbing swiftly at the hands reached out for him, jumped back. A cry from a countryman in the crowd warned him. Swiftly he glanced over his shoulder, saw that he was cornered, and with a low, sweeping swing of the arm he threw the knife low at Mahmout's abdomen.

The blade glinted as it flashed through the air; it thudded as it struck home; but the death-cry which the mob yelped out died short. With the expert's quickness Mahmout had flung his huge forearms before the speeding blade. Now he held his left arm up. The stiletto, quivering from the impact, had pierced it through.

With a fierce roar Mahmout plucked out the knife, hurled it from the ring and dived forward. The Italian fought like a fury, feet, teeth and fingernails making equal play. He sank his teeth in the injured left arm. Mahmout groped with his one sound hand and methodically clamped a hold on an ankle. He made sure that the hold was a firm one; then he wrenched suddenly—once. The Italian screamed and stiffened straight up under the appalling pain. Then he fell flat to the ground, and Toppy saw

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that his right foot was twisted squarely around and that the leg lay limp on the ground like a twisted rag.

"Stop," said Reivers, and Mahmout stepped back. "Take Tony's knife away from him, boys. Mahmout wins—for the time being."

"Inconsistent again," muttered Toppy. "Your scheme is all fallacies, Reivers. You give Tony a knife with which he may kill Mahmout at one stroke, but you don't let Mahmout finish him when he's got him down. Why don't you carry your system to its logical conclusion?"

"Why don't I?" chuckled Reivers, stepping down from the table. "Why, simply because Signor Antonio is the camp cook, and cooks are too scarce to be destroyed unnecessarily. Now come along, Treplin. Court's adjourned; a light docket today. I've been thinking of your wanting to learn how to run a logging-camp. I'm going to give you a change of jobs. You'll be no good in the blacksmith-shop till your ankle's normal again. Come along; I'll show you what I've picked out for you."

HE TURNED away from the ring as from a finished episode in the day's work. That was over. Whether Torta or Antonio lived or died, were whole or crippled for the rest of their lives, had no room in his thoughts. He strode toward the gate as if the yard were empty, and the crowd opened a way far before him. Outside the gate he led the way around the stockade toward where the river roared and tumbled through the chutes of Cameron Dam.

A cliff-like ledge, perhaps thirty feet in height, situated close to one end of the dam, was Reivers' objective, and he led Toppy around to the side facing the river. Here the dirt had been scraped away on the face of the ledge, and a great cave torn in the exposed rock. The hole was probably fifty feet wide, and ran from twelve to fifteen feet under the brow of the ledge. Toppy was surprised to see no timbers upholding the rocky roof, which seemed at any moment likely to drop great masses of jagged stone into the opening beneath.

"My little rock-pile," explained Reivers lightly. "When my brutes aren't good I put 'em to work here. The rock goes into the dam out there. Just at present Rosky's band of would-be malcontents are the ones who are suffering for daring to be dissatisfied with the—ah—simplicity, let us say, of Hell Camp."

He laughed mirthlessly.

"I'm going to put you in charge of this quarry, Treplin. You're to see that they get one hundred wheelbarrows of rock out of here per hour. You'll be here at daylight tomorrow."

Toppy nodded quietly.

"What's the punishment here?" he asked puzzled. "It looks like nothing more than hard work to me."

Reivers smiled the same smile that he had smiled upon Rosky.

"Look at the roof of that pit, Treplin," he said. "You've noticed that it isn't timbered up. Occasionally a stone drops down. Sometimes several stones. But one hundred barrows an hour have to come out of there just the same. And those rocks up there, you'll notice, are beautifully sharp and heavy."

Toppy felt Reivers' eyes upon him, watching to see what effect this explanation would have, and consequently he no more betrayed his feelings than he had at the brutal scenes of the "court."

"I see," he said casually. "I suppose this is why you made me read up on fractures?"

"Partly," said Reivers. He looked up at the jagged rocks in the roof of the pit and grinned. "And sometimes an accident here calls for a job for a pick and shovel. But I'm just, Treplin; only the malcontents are put to work in here."

"That is, those who have dared to declare themselves something besides your helpless slaves."

"Or dared to think of declaring themselves thus," agreed Reivers promptly.

"I see." Toppy was looking blandly at the roof, but his mind was working busily.

"Just why do you give me charge of this hole, Reivers—if you don't mind my asking? Isn't it rather an unusual honor for a green hand to be put over a crew like this?"

"Unusual! Oh, how beastly banal of you, Treplin!" laughed Reivers carelessly. "Surely you didn't expect me to do the usual thing, did you? You say you want to learn how to handle a camp like this. You're an interesting sort of creature, and I'd like to see you work out in the game of handling men, so I give you this chance. Oh, I'll do great things for you, Treplin, before I'm

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done with you! You can't imagine all that I've got in store for you."

The smile vanished and he turned away. He was through with this incident, too. Without another word or look at Toppy he went back to the stockade, his mind already busy with some other project. Toppy stood looking after him until Reivers' broad back disappeared around the corner of the stockade.

"No, you clever devil!" he muttered. "I can't imagine. But whatever it is, I promise I'll hand it back to you with a little interest, or furnish a job for a pick and shovel."

He walked slowly back to the blacksmith-shop. He was glad to be left alone. Though he had permitted no sign of it to escape him, Toppy had been enraged and sickened at what he had seen in the stockade. He admitted to himself that it was not the fact that men had been disabled and crippled, nor the brutal rules that had governed, nor that men had been exposed to death at the hands of others before his eyes, that had stirred him so. It was—Reivers. Reivers sitting up there on the table playing with men's bodies and lives as with so many cards—Reivers, the dominant, lord over his fellows.

The veins swelled in Toppy's big neck as he thought of Reivers, and his hitherto good-natured face took on a scowl that might have become some ancestral man-captain in the days of mace and mail, but which never before had found room on Toppy's countenance—not even when the opposing half-backs were guilty of slugging. But he was playing another game now, an older one, a fiercer one, and one which called to him as nothing had called before. It was the man-game now; and out there in the old, stern forest, spurred by the challenge of the man who was his natural enemy, the primitive fighting-man in Toppy shook off the restraint with which breeding, education and living had cumbered him, and stood out in a fashion that would have shocked Toppy's friends back East.

Near the shop he met Miss Pearson. By her manner he saw that she had been waiting for him, but Toppy merely raised his cap and made to pass on.

"Mr. Treplin!" There was astonishment at his rudeness in her exclamation.

"Well?" said Toppy.

"Your ankle?"

"Oh, yes. Pardon me for not expressing my thanks before. It's almost well—thanks to you and Mr. Reivers."

She made a slight shrinking movement and stood looking at him for a moment. She opened her lips, but no words came.

"Old Scotty told me about your kindness in coming to see me, you and Mr. Reivers together," said Toppy. "It was a relief to learn that your confidence in Reivers was justified."

She looked up quickly, straight into his eyes. A troubled look swept over her face. Then with a toss of the head she turned and crossed the road, and Toppy swung on his way to the room in the rear of the shop and closed the door behind him with a vicious slam.

CHAPTER XII

TOPPY'S FIRST MOVE

NEXT morning, in the cold stillness which precedes the coming of daylight in the North, Toppy stood leaning on his ax-handle cane and watched his crew of a dozen men file out of the stockade gate and turn toward the stone-quarry. They walked with the driven air of prisoners going to punishment. In the darkness their squat, shapeless figures were scarcely human. Their heads hung, their steps were listless, as if they had just completed a hard day's work instead of having arisen from a hearty breakfast.

The complete lack of spirit evinned by the men irritated Toppy. Was Reivers right after all? Were they nothing but clods, undeserving of fair and intelligent treatment?

"Hey! Wake up there! You look like a bunch of corpses. Show some life!" cried Toppy, in whom the bitter morning air was sending the red blood tingling.

The men did not raise their heads. They quickened their stumbling steps a little, as a heavy horse shambles forward a little under the whip. One or two looked back, beyond where Toppy was walking at the side of the line. Treplin with curiosity followed their glances. A grim-lipped shotgun guard with a hideous hawk nose had emerged from the darkness, and with his short-barreled weapon in the crook of his arm was following the line at a distance of fifty or sixty feet. Toppy halted abruptly. So did the guard.

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"What's the idea?" demanded Toppy. "Reivers send you?"

"Yes," said the guard gruffly.

"Does it take two of us to make this gang work?" Toppy was irritated. Reivers, he knew, would have handled the gang alone.

"The boss sent me," said the guard, with a finality that indicated that for him that ended the discussion.

The daylight now came wanly up the gap made in the forest by the brawling river, and the men stood irresolute before the quarry and peered up anxiously at the roof of the pit.

"Grab your tools," said Toppy. "Get in there and get to it."

The men, some of them taking picks and crowbars, some wheelbarrows, were soon ready to begin the day's work. But there was a hitch somewhere. They stood at the entrance to the pit and did not go in. They looked up at the threatening roof; then they looked anxiously, pleadingly, at Toppy. But Toppy was thinking savagely of how Reivers would have handled the gang alone and he paid no attention.

"Get in there!" he roared. "Come on; get to work!"

Accustomed to being driven, they responded at once to his command. Between two fears, fear of the dropping rocks and fear of the man over them, they entered the quarry and began the day's work. The guard took up a position on a slight eminence, where he was always in plain sight of the men, whether in the cave or wheeling the rock out to the dam. He held his gun constantly in the hollow of his arm, like a hunter.

Ten minutes after the first crowbar had clanged against rock in the quarry there was a rumbling sound, a crash, a scream; and the men came scrambling out in terror. Their rush stopped abruptly just outside the cave. Toppy was standing directly before them; the man with the gun had noisily cocked his weapon and brought the black barrel to bear on the heads of the men. Half of them slunk at once back into the cave. One of the others held up a bleeding hand to Toppy.

"Ah, pleess, bahss, pleess," he pleaded. "Rock kill us next time. Pleess, bahss!"

There was a moment of silence while Toppy looked at the men's terror-stricken faces. The shotgun guard rattled the slide on his gun. The men began to retreat into the cave, their helplessness and hopelessness writ large upon their flat faces.

"Hold on there!" said Toppy suddenly. After all, a fellow couldn't do things like that—drive helpless cattle like these to certain injury, even possible death. "I'll take a look in there."

He hobbled and shouldered his way through the men and entered the pit. A few rocks had dropped from the roof, luckily falling in a far corner beyond where the men were working. But Toppy saw at once how serious this petty accident was; for the whole roof of the cave now was loosened, and as sure as the men pounded and pried at the rocks beneath they would bring a shower of stone down upon their heads.

"Like rats in a trap," he thought. "Hi!" he called. "Get out of here. Get out!"

Down near the dam he had noticed a huge pile of old timbers which probably had been used for piling while the dam was being put in. Thither he now led his men, and shouldering the largest piece himself he hobbled back to the cave followed by the gang, each bearing a timber. A sudden change had come over the men as he indicated what he was going to do. They moved more rapidly. Their terror was gone. Some of them smiled, and some talked excitedly. Under Toppy's direction they went to work with a vim shoring up the loosened roof of the cave. It was only a half hour's work to place the props so that the men working beneath were free of any serious danger from above. Toppy could sense the change of feeling toward him that had come over the men as they saw the timbers go into place, and he was forced to admit that it warmed him comfortably. They sprang eagerly to obey his slightest behest, and the graitude in their faces was pitiful to behold.

"Now jump!" said Toppy when the roof was safely propped. "Hustle and make up the time we've lost."

As he came out of the cave the place fairly rang with noise as the men furiously tore loose the rock and dumped it in the barrows. Toppy took a long breath and wiped his brow. The hawk-nosed guard spat in disgust.

"Will you do me a favor?" said Toppy, suddenly swinging toward him.

"What is it?" asked the man.

"Take a message to Mr. Reivers from me. Tell him your services are no longer required

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at this spot. Tell him I said you looked like a fool, standing up there with your bum gun. Tell him—" Toppy, despite his sore ankle, had swung up the rise and was beside the guard before the latter thought of making a move— "that I said I'd throw you and your gun in the river if you didn't duck. And for your own information—" Toppy was towering over the man—"I'll do it right now, unless you get out of here—quick!"

The guard's shifty eyes tried to meet Toppy's and failed. Against the Slavs he would have dared to use his gun; they were his inferiors. Against Toppy he did not dare even so much as to think of the weapon, and without it he was only a jail-rat, afraid of men who looked him in the eyes.

"The boss sent me here," he said sullenly.

Toppy leaned forward until his face was close to the guard's. The man shrank.

"Duck!" said Toppy. That was all. The guard moved away with an alacrity that showed how uncomfortable the spot had become to him.

"You'll hear about this!" he whined from a distance.

And Toppy laughed, laughed carelessly and loudly, rampant with the sensation of power. The men, scurrying past with barrows of rock, noted the retreat of the guard and smiled. They looked up at Toppy with slavish admiration, as lesser men look up to the champion who has triumphed before their eyes. One or two of the older men raised their hats as they passed him, their Old-World serf-like way of showing how they felt toward him.

"Jump!" ordered Toppy gruffly. "Get a move on there; make up that lost time."

REIVERS had said that a hundred barrows an hour must be dumped into the dam. With a half hour lost in shoring up the roof, there were fifty loads to be caught up during the day if the average was to be maintained. Carefully timing each load and keeping tally for half an hour, Toppy saw that a hundred loads per hour was the limit of his gang working at a normal pace. To get out the hundred loads they must keep steadily at work, with no time lost because of the falling rocks from above.

He began to see the method of Reivers' apparent madness in placing him in charge of the gang. With the gang working in the dead, terrorized fashion that had characterized their movements before the timbers were in place, Toppy knew that he would have failed; he could not have got out the hundred loads per hour. Reivers would have proved him to be his inferior; for Reivers, with his inhumanity, would have driven the gang as if no lives nor limbs hung on the tissue.

Toppy smiled grimly as he looked at his watch and marked new figures on the tally sheet. The men, pitifully grateful for the protecting timbers, had taken hold of their work with such new life that the rock was going into the dam at the rate of one hundred and twenty loads an hour.

"Move number one!" muttered Toppy, snapping shut his watch. "I wonder what the Snow-Burner's come-back will be when he knows. Hey, you roughnecks! Keep moving, there; keep moving!"

The men responded cheerfully to his every command. They could gladly obey his will; they were safe under him; he had taken care of them, the helpless ones. That evening, when they filed back into the stockade under Toppy's watchful eye, one of the older men, a swarthy old fellow with large brass rings in his ears, sank his hat low as he passed in.

"Buna nopte, Domnule," he said humbly.

"What did he say?" demanded Toppy of one of the young men who knew a little English.

"Pleess, bahss; old man, he Magyar," was the reply. "He say, 'Good night, master.' "

Toppy stood dumfounded while the line passed through the gate.

"Well," he said with a grin, "what do you know about that?"

CHAPTER XIII

REIVERS REPLIES

REIVERS did not come to the shop that night for his evening diversion, nor did Toppy see him at all during the next day. But in the morning following he saw that Reivers had taken cognizance in his own peculiar way of Toppy's action in driving the shotgun guard away from the quarry. As the line of rock men filed out of the stockade in the chill half light Toppy saw that the best worker of his gang, a cheerful, stocky man called Mikal, was missing. In his place, walking with the successful plug-ugly's

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insolent swagger, was none other than Bill Sheedy, the appointed trouble-maker of Hell Camp; and Toppy knew that Reivers had made another move in his tantalizing game.

He went hot despite the raw chilliness at the thought of it. Reivers was playing with him, too, playing even as he had played with Rosky! And Toppy knew that, like Rosky, the Snow-Burner had selected him, too, to be crushed—to be marked as an inferior, to be made to acknowledge Reivers as his master.

Reivers had read the challenge which was in Toppy's eyes and had, with his cold smile of complete confidence and contempt, taken up the gage. The substitution of Bill Sheedy, Reivers' pet trouble-maker, for an effective workman was a definite move toward Toppy's humiliation.

There was nothing in Toppy's manner, however, to indicate his feelings as he followed the line to the quarry. Toppy allowed Sheedy's swagger, by which he plainly indicated that he was hunting for trouble, to go as if unobserved. Sheedy, being extremely simple of mind, leaped instantly to the conclusion that Toppy was afraid of him and swaggered more insolently than ever. He was in an irritable mood this morning, was Bill Sheedy; and as soon as the gang was out of sight of the stockade—and, thought Toppy bitterly, therefore out of possible sight of Reivers—he began to vent his irritation upon his fellow-workmen.

He shouldered them out of his way, swore at them, threatened them with his fists, kicked them carelessly. There was no finesse in Bill's method; he was mad and showed it. When the daylight came up the river sufficiently strong to begin the day's work, Bill had worked himself up to a proper frame of mind for his purpose. He stood still while the other men willingly seized their tools and barrows and tramped into the quarry.

Toppy apparently did not notice. So far as he indicated by his manner he was quite oblivious of Sheedy's existence. Bill stood looking at Toppy with a scowl on his unpretty face, awaiting the order to go in with the other men. The order did not come. Toppy was busy directing the men where to begin their work. He did not so much as look at Bill. Bill finally was forced to call attention to himself.

"——!" he growled, spitting generously. "Yah ain't goin' tuh git me tuh wurruk in no hole like that."

"All right, Bill," said Toppy instantly. "All right."

Bill was staggered. His simple mind failed utterly to comprehend that there might lie something behind Toppy's apparently humble manner. Bill could see only one thing—the straw-boss was afraid of him.

"Yah —— know it, it's all right!" he spluttered. "If it ain't I'd —— soon make it all right."

"Sure," said Toppy, and without looking toward Bill he hurried into the quarry to see how the timbers were standing the strain. Bill stood puzzled. He had bluffed the straw-boss, sure enough; but still the thing wasn't entirely satisfactory. The boss didn't seem to care whether he worked or whether he loafed. Bill refused to be treated with such little consideration. He was of more importance than that.

"Hey, you!" he called as Toppy emerged from the pit. "I'm going to wheel rock down to the dam, that's what I'm going tuh do. Going to wheel it; but yuh ain't goin' tuh make me go in there and dig it. See? I'm going to wheel rock."

Now for the first time Toppy seemed to consider Bill.

"What makes you think you are?" he said quietly. He was looking at his watch, but Bill noticed that in spite of his sore ankle and cane the boss had managed to move near to him in uncannily swift fashion.

"You know you can't work here now," Toppy continued before Bill's thick wits had framed an answer. "You won't go into the quarry, so I can't use you."

Bill stared as if bereft of all of his faculties. The boss had slipped his watch back into his pocket. He had turned away.

"Can't use me—can't—— Say! Who says I can't work here?" roared Bill, shaking his fists. He was standing on the plank on which the wheelbarrows were rolled out of the cave, blocking the way of the men with the first loads of the day.

"Look out, Bill!" said Toppy softly, turning around. Instinctively Bill threw up his guard—threw it up to guard his jaw. Toppy's left drove into his solar plexus so hard that Bill seemed to be molded on to the fist, hung there until he dropped and rolled backward on the ground.

"Get along there!" commanded Toppy

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to the wheelbarrowmen. "The way's clear. Jump!"

Grinning and snatching glances of ridicule at the prostrate Sheedy, they hurried past. They dumped their loads in the dam and came back with empty barrows, and still Sheedy lay there, like a dumped grain-sack, to one side of their path. The flat faces of the men cracked with grins as they looked worshipfully at Toppy.

"Jump!" said he. "Get a move on, you roughnecks!"

And they grinned more widely in sheer delight at his rough ordering.

BILL SHEEDY lay for a long time as he had fallen. The blow he had stopped would have done for a pugilist in good condition, and Sheedy's midriff was soft and fat. Finally he raised his head and looked around. Such surprise and wobegoneness showed in his expression that the grinning Slavs laughed outright at him. Bill slowly came to a sitting posture and drew a hand across his puzzled brow while he looked dully at the laughing men and at Toppy. Then he remembered and he dropped his eyes.

"Get on your way, Bill," said Toppy casually. "If you're not able to walk, I'll have half a dozen of the men help you. You're through here."

Bill lurched unsteadily to his feet and staggered away a few steps. That terrific punch and the iron-calm manner of the man who had dealt it had scared him. His first thought was to get out of reach; his second, one of anger at the Bohunks who dared to laugh at him, Bill Sheedy, the fighting man!

But the fashion in which the men laughed took the nerve out of Bill. They were laughing contemptuously at him; they looked down upon him; they were no longer afraid. And there were a dozen of them, and they laughed together; and Bill Sheedy knew that his days as camp bully were over. The straw-boss was looking at him coldly, and Bill moved farther away. Fifteen minutes later the straw-boss, who had apparently been oblivious of his presence, swung around and said abruptly:

"What's the matter, Bill? Why don't you go back to Reivers?"

Bill's growled reply contained several indistinct but definitely profane characterizations of Reivers.

"I can't go back to him," Sheedy said sullenly.

"Why not?" laughed Treplin. "He's your friend, isn't he? He let you keep the money you'd stolen, and all that."

"Keep ——!" growled Sheedy. "He's got that himself. Made me make him a present of it, or—or he'd turn me over for a little trouble I had down in Duluth."

Toppy stiffened and looked at him carefully.

"Telling the truth, Bill?"

"Ask him," replied Sheedy. "He don't make no bones about it; he gets something on you and then he grafts on you till you're dry."

Toppy stood silent while he assimilated this information. His scrutiny of Sheedy told him that the man was telling the truth. He felt grateful to Sheedy; through him he had got a new light on Reivers' character, light which he knew he could use later on.

"Through making an ass of yourself here, Bill?" he asked briskly. Bill's answer was to hang his head in a way that showed how thoroughly all the fight was taken out of him.

"All right, then; grab a wheelbarrow and get into the pit. Keep your end up with the other men and there'll be no hard feelings. Try to play any of your tricks, and it's good night for you. Now get to it, or get out."

Sheedy's rush for a wheelbarrow showed how relieved he was. He had been standing between the devil and the deep sea—between Reivers with his awful displeasure and Toppy with his awful punch; and he was eager to find a haven.

"I ain't trying any tricks," he muttered as he made for the quarry. "The Snow-Burner—he's the one. He copped me dough and sent me down here and told me to work off my mad on you."

"Well, you've worked it off now, I guess," said Toppy curtly. "Dig in, now; you're half a dozen loads behind."

Sheedy did not fill the place of the man he had supplanted, for in his mixed-ale condition he was unable to work a full day at a strong man's pace. However, he did so well that when Toppy checked up in the evening he found that his tally again was well over the stipulated average of a hundred loads of rock per hour.

"Move two," he thought. "I wonder what comes next?"

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CHAPTER XIV

"JOKER AND DEUCES WILD"

WHEN Toppy went back to the shop that evening he found old Campbell cooking the evening meal with only his right hand in use, the left being wrapped in a neat bandage.

"That's what comes of leaving me without a helper," grumbled the Scot as Toppy looked inquiringly at the injured hand. "I maun have ye back, lad; I will not be knocking my hands to pieces doing two men's work to please any man. And yet—" he cocked his head on one side and looked fondly at the bandage—"I dunno but what 'twas worth it. I'm an auld man, and it's long sin' I had a pretty lass make fuss over me."

"What?" snapped Toppy.

"Oh, go on with ye, lad," teased Scotty, holding the bandage up for his admiration. "Can not you see that I'm by nature a fav'rite with the ladies? Yon lass in the office sewed this bandage on my old meat hook.

"'Does it hurt, Mr. Campbell?' says she. 'Not as much as something that's heavy on my mind, lass,' says I. 'What's that?' she says. 'Mr. Reivers and you, lass,' says I; and I told her as well as an old man can tell a lass who's little more than a child just what the Snow-Burner is. 'I can't believe it,' says she. 'He's a gentleman.' 'More's the pity,' I says. 'That's what makes him dangerous.' 'Were you not afraid of him at first?' says I. 'Yes,' she says. 'Tell me honest, as you would your own father,' says I, 'are you not afraid of him now?'

"With that she gave me a look like a little fawn that has smelled the wolf circling 'round it, but she will not answer. 'He can't be what you say he is,' she says, trembling. 'Lass,' says I, 'a week ago you would never have believed it possible that you'd ever wish aught to do with him. Now you walk with him and talk with him, and smile when he does.' And I told her of Tilly.

"'It's not so,' says she. 'It can't be so. Mr. Reivers is a gentleman, not a brute. He's too strong and fine,' says she, 'for such conduct.' And the bandage being done, I was dismissed with a toss of the head. Aye, aye, lad; but 'twas fine to have her little fingers sewing away around my old hand. Yon's a fine, sweet lass; but I fear me Reivers has set his will to win her."

Toppy made no reply. Campbell's words aroused only one emotion in him—a fresh flare of anger against Reivers. For it was Reivers, and his strength and dominance, that was responsible. Toppy already was sorry for the swift judgment that he had passed on the girl on Sunday, and for the rudeness which, in his anger, he had displayed toward her. He knew now the power that lay in Reivers' will, the calm, compelling fire that lurked in his eyes.

Men quailed before those eyes and did their bidding. And a girl, a little girl who must naturally feel grateful toward him for her position, could hardly be expected to resist the Snow-Burner's undeniable fascinations. Why should she? Reivers was everything that women were drawn to in men—kinglike in his power of mind and body, striking in appearance, successful in whatever he sought to do.

It was inevitable that the girl should fall under his spell, but the thought of it sent a chill up Toppy's spine as from the thought of something monstrous. He raged inwardly as he remembered how clearly the girl had let him see his own insignificance in her estimation compared with Reivers. She had refused to believe Campbell; Toppy knew that she would refuse to listen to him if he tried to warn her against Reivers.

The fashion in which he slammed the supper-dishes on the table brought a protest from Scotty.

"Dinna be so strong with the dishes, lad; they're not iron," said he.

"You 'tend to your cooking," growled Toppy. "I'll set this table."

Campbell paused with a spoon in midair and gaped at him in astonishment. He opened his mouth to speak, but the black scowl on Toppy's brow checked his tongue. Silently he turned to his cooking. He had seen that he was no longer boss in the room behind the shop.

AFTER supper Campbell brought forth a deck of cards and began to play solitaire. Toppy threw himself upon his bunk and lay in the darkness with his troublesome thoughts. An unmistakable step outside the door brought him to his feet, for he had an instinctive dislike to meeting Reivers save face to face and standing up. Reivers came in without speaking and shut the door behind him. He stood with his hand on the knob and

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looked over at Toppy and shook his head.

"Treplin, how could you disappoint me so?" he asked mockingly. "After I had reposed such confidence in you, too! I'm sorely disappointed in you. I never looked for you to be a victim of the teachings of weak men and I find—ye gods! I find that you're a humanitarian!"

By this and this only did Reivers indicate that he had knowledge of how Toppy had protected his men.

Toppy looked steadily across the room at him, a grim smile on his lips.

"Did Bill Sheedy call me that?" he asked dryly. "Shame on him if he did; I didn't make him slip me the Torta boys' money as a present."

Reivers' laugh rang instantly through the room.

"So you've won Bill's confidences already, have you?" he said without the slightest trace of shame or discomfiture. "Dear old Bill! He actually seemed to be under the impression that he had a title to that money—until I suggested otherwise. I ask you, Treplin, as a man with a trained if not an efficient mind, is Bill Sheedy a proper man to possess the title to ninety-eight dollars?"

He swung across the room, laughing heartily, and reached into the cupboard for Scotty's whisky. As he did so his eyes fell upon the cards which Scotty was placing upon the table, and for the first time Toppy saw in his eyes the gleam of a human weakness. Reivers stood, paused, for an instant, his eyes feasting upon the cards. It was only an instant, but it was enough to whisper to Toppy the secret of the Snow-Burner's passion for play. And Toppy exulted at this chance discovery of the vulnerable joint in Reivers' armor; for Toppy—alas for his misspent youth!—was a master-warrior when a deck of cards was the field of battle.

"It's none of my funeral, Reivers," he said carelessly, strolling over to the table where Campbell went on playing, apparently oblivious to the conversation. "I don't know anything about Sheedy. Of course, if you're serious, the Torta boys are the only ones in camp who've got any right to the money."

Reivers stopped short in the act of pouring himself a drink. Campbell, with his back toward Reivers, paused with a card in his hand. Toppy yawned and dropped into a chair from which he could watch Campbell's game.

"But that's none of my business," he said as if dropping the subject. "There's a chance for your black queen, Scotty."

Reivers poured himself his tumbler full of Scotch whisky, drew up a third chair to the table and sat down across from Toppy. The latter apparently was absorbed in watching Campbell's solitaire. Reivers took a long, contented sip of his fiery tipple and smiled pleasantly.

"You turned loose an idea there, Treplin," he said. "But can you make your premise stand argument? Are you sure that the Torta boys are the ones who have a right to that ninety-eight dollars? On what grounds do you give them the exclusive title to the money?"

"It's theirs. Bill stole it from them. You said he did. That's all I know about it," said Toppy, scarcely raising his eyes from the cards.

"Why do you say it was theirs, Treplin?" persisted Reivers smilingly. "Merely because they had it in their possession! Isn't that so? You don't know how they came by it, but because they had it in their possession you speak of it as theirs. Very well. Bill Sheedy took it away from them. It was in his possession, so, following your line of logic, it was his—for a short while.

"I took it from Bill. It's in my possession now. Therefore, if your premise is sound, the money is mine. Why, Treplin, I'm really obliged to you for furnishing me such a clear title to my loot. It was—ah—beginning to trouble my conscience." He laughed suddenly, punctuating his laughter with a blow of his fist on the table.

"All rot, Treplin; all silly sophistry which weak men have built up to protect themselves from the strong! The infernal lie that because a man is in possession of a certain thing it is his to the exclusion of the rest of the world! Property-rights! I'll tell you the truth—why this money is mine, why I'm the one who has the real title to it. I was able to take it, and I am able to keep it. There's the natural law of property-rights, Treplin. What do you say to that?"

"Fine!" laughed Toppy, throwing up his hands in surrender. "You bowl me over, Reivers. The money is yours; and—" he glanced at the cards "—and if you and I should play a little game of poker, joker and deuces wild, and I should take it away from you, it would be mine; and there you are."

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The words had slipped out of him, apparently without any aim; but Toppy saw by the sudden glance which Reivers dropped to the cards that the gambling-hunger in the Snow-Burner had been awakened.

"Joker and deuces wild," he repeated as if fascinated. "Yes, that ought to help make a two-handed game fast."

THE whole manner of the man seemed for the moment changed. For the first time since Toppy had met him he seemed to be seriously interested. Previously, when he played with the lives and bodies of men or deviled their minds with his wiles, his interest had never been deeper than that of a man who plays to keep himself from being bored. He was the master in all such affairs; they could furnish him at their best but an idle sort of interest. But not even the Snow-Burner was master of the inscrutable laws of Chance. Nor was he master of himself when cards were flipping before his eyes. Toppy had guessed right; Reivers had a weakness, and it was to be "card-crazy."

"Get over there on that other table with your solitaire, Campbell!" he ordered. He reached into Campbell's liquor-cabinet and drew out a fresh pack of cards, which he tossed to Toppy. "You started something, Mr. Humanitarian," he continued, clearing the table. "Open the deck and cut for deal. Then show me what you've got to stack up against this ninety-eight dollars." And he slapped a wad of crumpled bills on the table.

Toppy nonchalantly reached into his pockets. Then he grinned. The two twenty-dollar bills which he had paid the agent back in Rail Head for the privilege of hiring out to Hell Camp were all the money he had with him. He was broke. He debated with himself a moment, then unhooked his costly watch from the chain and pushed it across to Reivers.

"You can sell that for five hundred—if you win it," he said. "I'll play it even against your ninety-eight bucks. Give me forty-nine to start with. If you win them give me forty-nine more, and the watch is yours. Right?"

"Right," said Reivers, keeping the watch and dividing his roll with Toppy. "Dollar jack-pots, table-stakes. Deal 'em up."

Toppy lost ten dollars on the first hand almost before he realized that the game had begun. He called Reivers' bet and had three fours and nothing else in his hand. Reivers had two of the wild deuces and a king. Toppy shook his head, like a pugilist clearing his wits after a knockdown. Why had he called? He knew his three fours weren't good. His card-sense had told him so. He had called against his judgment. Why?

Suddenly, like something tangible pressing against his brain, he felt Reivers' will thrusting itself against his. Then he knew. That was why he had called. Reivers had willed that he do so, and, catching him off his guard, had had his way.

"Good work!" said Toppy, passing the cards. He was himself again; his wits had cleared. He allowed Reivers to take the next three pots in succession without a bet. Reivers looked at him puzzled. The fourth pot Toppy opened for five dollars and Reivers promptly raised him ten. After the draw Toppy bet a dollar, and Reivers again raised it to ten more. Toppy called. Reivers, caught bluffing without a single pair, stared as Toppy laid down his hand and revealed nothing but his original openers, a pair of aces. A frown passed over Reivers' face. He peered sharply at Toppy from beneath his overhanging brows, but Toppy was raking in the pot as casually as if such play with a pair of aces was part of his system.

"Good work!" said Reivers, and gathered the cards to him with a jerk.

Half a dozen hands later, on Reivers' deal, Toppy picked up his hand and saw four kings.

"I'll pass," said he.

"I open for five," said Reivers.

"Take the money," laughed Toppy carelessly, throwing his hand into the discard. For an instant Reivers' eyes searched him with a look of surprise. The glance was sufficient to tell Toppy that what he had suspected was true.

"So he's dealing 'em as he wants 'em!" thought Toppy. "All right. He's brought it on himself."

AN HOUR later Reivers arose from the table with a smile. The money had changed hands. Toppy was snapping his watch back on its chain, and stuffing the bills into his pocket.

"Your money now, Treplin," laughed Reivers. "Until somebody takes it away from you."

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But there was a new note in his laughter. He had been beaten, and his irritation showed in his laughter and in the manner in which, after he had taken another big drink of whisky, he paused in the doorway as he made to leave.

"Great luck, Treplin; great luck with cards you have!" he said laughingly. "Too bad your luck ends there, isn't it? What's that paraphrase of the old saw? 'Lucky with cards, unlucky with women.' Good night, Treplin."

He went out, laughing as a man laughs when he has a joke on the other fellow.

"What did he mean by that?" asked Campbell, puzzled.

"I don't know," said Toppy. But he knew now that Tilly had told Reivers of his talk with Miss Pearson the first evening in camp, and that Reivers had saved it up against him.

CHAPTER XV

THE WAY OF THE SNOW-BURNER

IN THE morning, before the time for beginning the day's work, Toppy went to the stockade; and with one of his English-speaking Slavs acting as interpreter hunted up the Torta brothers and returned to them the stolen money which he had won from Reivers. He did not consider it necessary to go into the full details of how the money came to be in his possession, or attempt to explain the prejudice of his kind against keeping stolen goods.

"Just tell them that Sheedy gave up the money, and that it's theirs again; and they'd better hide it in their shoes so they won't lose it," he directed the interpreter.

Whereat the latter, a garrulous young man who had been telling the camp all about the wonderful new "bahss" in the quarry—a "bahss" who saved men's lives—whenever he could get any one to listen, broke forth into a wonderful tale of how the money came to be returned, and of the wonderful "bahss" that stood before them, whom they should all take off their caps to and worship.

For this was no ordinary man, this "bahss." No, he was far above all other men. It was an honor to work under him. For instance, as to this money: the "bahss" had heard how the red-haired one—Sheedy—had stolen, how he oppressed many poor men and broke the noses of those who dared to stand up against him.

The "bahss" had the interests of poor men at heart. What had he done? He had struck the red-haired one such a mighty blow in the stomach that the red-haired one had flown high in the air, and alighting on the ground had been moved by the fear of death and disgorged the stolen money that his conscience might be easy.

The story of how Toppy had propped up the roof of the stone quarry, and saved the limbs and possibly lives of his workmen; how he had driven the shotgun guard away, and how he had smitten Sheedy and laid him low before all men, had circulated through the camp by this time. Everybody knew that the new straw-boss, though fully as big and strong as the Snow-Burner himself, was a man who considered the men under him as something more than cattle and treated them accordingly. True, he drove men hard; but they went willingly for him, whereas under the Snow-Burner they hurried merely because of the chill fear that his eyes drove into their hearts. In short, Toppy was just such a boss as all men wished to work under—strong but just, firm, but not inhuman.

Even Sheedy was loyal to him.

"He laid me out, all right," he grumbled to a group of "white men," "but, give him credit for it, he give me a chanct to get up me guard. There won't be any breaking yer bones when yuh ain't lookin' from him. And he wouldn't graft on yuh, either. He's right. That other——, he—he ain't human."

The fact that he had been humane enough, and daring enough, to prop up the roof of the quarry had no effect on the "white men" toward developing a respect for Toppy. They despised the Slavs too thoroughly to be conscious of any brotherhood with them. But that he could put Bill Sheedy away with a single punch, that he could warn Bill to put up his guard and then knock him out with one blow, that was something to wring respect even from that hard-bitten crew.

The Snow-Burner never had done anything like that. He had laid low the biggest men in camp, but it was usually with a kick or with a blow that was entirely unexpected. The Snow-Burner never warned anybody. He smiled, threw them off their guard, then smote like a flash of lightning. He had whipped half a dozen men at once

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in a stand-up fight, but they had been poor Bohunks, fools who couldn't fight unless they had knives in their hands. But to tell a seasoned bruiser like Bill, the best man with his fists in camp, to put up his hands and then beat him to the knockout punch—that was something that not even the Snow-Burner had attempted to do.

That was taking a chance, that was; and the Snow-Burner never took chances. That was why these cruel-fierce "white men," though they admired and applauded him for his dominance and his ruthlessness toward the Slavs, hated Reivers with a hatred that sprang from the Northern man's instinctive liking for fair play in a fight. They began naturally to compare him with Toppy, who had played fair and yet won. And, naturally, because such were the standards they lived and died by, they began to predict that some day the Snow-Burner and Toppy must fight, and they hoped that they might be there to see the battle.

So Toppy, this morning, as he came to the stockade, was in the position of something of a hero to most of the rough men who slouched past him in the gloom to their day's work. He had felt it before, this hero-worship, and he recognized it again. Though the surroundings were vastly different and the men about him of a strange breeding, the sense of it was much the same as that he had known at school when, a sweater thrown across his huge shoulders, he had plowed his way through the groups of worshipping undergrads on to the gridiron. It was much the same here. Men looked up to him. They nudged one another as they passed, lowered their voices when he was near, studied him appraisingly. Toppy had felt it before, too often to be mistaken; and the youth in his veins responded warmly. The respect of these men was a harder thing to win than the other. He thought of how he had arrived in camp, shaky from Harvey Duncombe's champagne, with no purpose in life, no standing among men who were doing men's work. Grimly also he thought of how Miss Pearson, that first evening, had called him a "nice boy." Would she call him that now, he wondered, if she could see how these rough, tried men looked up to him? Would Reivers treat him as a thing to experiment with after this?

Thus it was a considerably elated Toppy, though not a big-headed one, who led his men out of the stockade, to the quarry—to the blow that Reivers had waiting for him there. His first hint that something was wrong was when the foremost men, whistling and tool-laden, made for the pit in the first gray light of day and paused with exclamations and curses at its very mouth. Others crowded around them. They looked within. Then, with fallen jaws, they turned and looked to the "bahss" for an explanation, for help.

Toppy shouldered his way through the press and stepped inside. Then he saw what had halted his men and made their faces turn white. To the last stick the shoring-timbers had been removed from the pit, and the roof, threatening and sharp-edged, hung ready to drop on the workmen below, as it had before Toppy had wrought a change.

The daylight came creeping up the river and a wind began to blow. So still was it there before the pit-mouth that Toppy was conscious of these things as he stepped outside. The men were standing about with their wheelbarrows and tools in their hands. They looked to him. His was the mind and will to determine what they should do. They depended upon him; they trusted him; they would obey his word confidently.

Toppy felt a cold sweat breaking out on his forehead. He wanted to take off his cap, to bare his head to the chill morning wind, to draw his hand across his eyes, to do something to ease himself and gather his wits. He did none of these things. The instinct of leadership arose strong within him. He could not show these men who looked up to him as their unquestioned leader that he had been dealt a blow that had taken the mastery from him.

For Toppy, in that agonized second when he glanced up at the unsupported roof and knew what those loose rocks meant to any men working beneath, realized that he could not drive his men in there to certain injury for many, possibly death for some. It wasn't in him. He wasn't bred that way. The unfeeling brute had been removed from his big body and spirit by generations of men and women who had played fair with inferiors, and by a lifetime of training and education.

He understood plainly the significance of the thing. Reivers had done it; no one else would have dared. He had lifted Toppy up to a tiny elevation above the other men

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in camp; now he was knocking him down. It was another way for Reivers to show his mastery. The men who had begun to look up to Toppy would now see how easily the Snow-Burner could show himself his superior. Miss Pearson would hear of it. He would appear in the light of a "nice boy" whom the Snow-Burner had played with.

THESE thoughts ran through Toppy's mind as he stood outside the pit, with his white-faced men looking up to him, and groped for a way out of his dilemma. Within he was sickened with the sense of a catastrophe; outside he remained calm and confident to the eye. He stepped farther out, to where he could see the end of the dam where he had secured the props for the roof. It was as he had expected; the big pile of timbers that had lain there was gone to the last stick. He turned slowly back, and then in the gray light of coming day he looked into the playfully smiling face of Reivers, who had emerged, it seemed, from nowhere.

"Looking for your humanitarian props, Treplin?" laughed the Snow-Burner. "Oh, they're gone; they're valuable; they served a purpose which nothing else would fill—quite so conveniently. I used them for a corduroy road in the swamp. Between men and timbers, Treplin, always save your timbers." His manner changed like a flash to one hurried and businesslike. "What're you waiting for?" he snarled. "Why don't you get 'em in there? Mean to say you're wasting company money because one of these cattle might get a broken back?"

They looked each other full in the eyes, but Toppy knew that for the time being Reivers had the whip-hand.

"I mean to say just that," he said evenly. "I'm not sending any men in there until I get that roof propped up again."

"Bah!" Reivers' disgust was genuine. "I thought you were a man; I find you're a suit of clothes full of emotions, like all the rest!"

He seemed to drive away his anger by sheer will-force and bring the cold, sneering smile back to his lips.

"So we're up against a situation that's too strong for us, are we, Mr. Humanitarian?" he laughed. "In spite of our developed intelligence, we lay down cold in the face of a little proposition like this! Good-by to our dreams of learning how to handle men! It isn't in us to do it; we're a weak sister."

His bantering mood fled with the swiftness of all his changes. Toppy and his aspirations as a leader—that was another incident of the day's work that was over and done with.

"Go back to the shop, to Scotty, Treplin," he said quietly. "You're not responsible for your limitations. Scotty says you make a pretty fair helper. Be consoled. He's waiting for you."

He turned instantly toward the men. Toppy, with the hot blood rushing in his throat, but helpless as he was, swung away from the pit without a word. As he did so, he saw that the hawk-faced shotgun guard had appeared and taken his position on the little rise where his gun bore slantwise on the huddled men before the pit, and he hurried to get out of sight of the scene. His tongue was dry and his temples throbbing with rage, but the cool section of his mind urged him away from the pit in silence.

Between clenched teeth he cursed his injured ankle. It was the ankle that made him accept without return the shame which Reivers had put upon him. The canny sense within him continued to whisper that until the ankle was sound he must bide his time. Reivers and he were too nearly a pair to give him the slightest chance for success if he essayed defiance at even the slightest disadvantage.

Choking back as well as he could the anger that welled up within him, he made his way swiftly to the blacksmith-shop. Campbell, bending over the anvil, greeted Toppy cheerily as he heard the heavy tread behind him.

"The Snow-Burner promised he'd send you here, and—— Losh, mon!" he gasped as he turned around and saw Toppy's face. "What's come o'er ye? You look like you're ripe for murder."

"There'll probably be murder done in this camp before the day's over, but I won't do it," replied Toppy.

As he threw off his mackinaw preparatory to starting work he snapped out the story of the situation at the quarry. Campbell, leaning on his hammer, grew grim of lips and eyes as he listened.

"Aye; I thought at the time it were better for you had ye lost at poker last night," he said slowly. "He's taking revenge. But they will put out his light for him. Human

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flesh and blood won't stand it. The Snow-Burner goes too far. He'll—— Hark! Good Heavens! Hear that!"

For a moment they stood near the open doorway of the shop staring at one another in horrified, mute questioning. The crisp stillness of the morning rang and echoed with the sharp roar of a shotgun. The sound came from the direction of the quarry. Across the street they heard the door of the office-building open sharply. The girl, without hat or coat, her light hair flying about her head, came running like a deer to the door of the shop.

"Mr. Campbell, Mr. Campbell!" she called tremblingly, peering inside. Then she saw Toppy.

"Oh!" she gasped. She started back a little. There were surprise and relief in her exclamation, in her eyes, in her movement.

"I was afraid—I thought maybe——" She drew away from the door in confusion. "I only wanted to know—to know—what that noise was."

But Toppy had stepped outside the shop and followed closely after her.

"What did you think it was, Miss Pearson?" he asked. "What were you afraid of when you heard that shot? That something had happened between Reivers and myself?"

"I—I meant to warn you," she said, greatly flustered. "Tilly told me all about—a lot of things last night. She told me that she had told Reivers all she heard you say to me that first night here, and that he—Mr. Reivers, she said, was your enemy, and that he would—would surely hurt you."

"Yes?"

"I didn't want to see you get hurt, because I felt it was because of me that you came here. I—I don't want any one hurt because of me."

"That's all?" he asked.

She looked surprised.

"Why, yes."

Toppy nodded curtly.

"Then Tilly told you that Mr. Reivers had a habit of hurting people?"

At this the red in her cheeks rose to a flush. Her blue eyes looked at him waveringly, then dropped to the ground.

"It isn't true! It can't be true!" she stammered.

"Did Tilly tell you—about herself?" he persisted mercilessly.

The next instant he wished the words unsaid, for she shrank as if he had struck her. She looked very small just then. Her proud, self-reliant bearing was gone. She was very much all alone.

"Yes." The word was scarcely more than a whisper and she did not look up. "But it—it can not be so; I know it can not."

TOPPY was no student of feminine psychology, but he saw plainly that just then she was a woman who did not wish to believe, therefore would not believe, anything ill of the man who had fascinated her. He saw that Reivers had fascinated her; that in spite of herself she was drawn toward him, dominated by him. Her mind told her that what she had heard of the man was true, but her heart refused to let her believe. Toppy saw that she was very unhappy and troubled, and unselfishly he forgot himself and his enmity toward Reivers in a desire to help her.

"Miss Pearson!—Miss Pearson!" he cried eagerly. "Is there anything I can do for you—anything in the world?"

"Yes," she said slowly. "Tell me that it isn't so—what Mr. Campbell and Tilly have said about Mr. Reivers."

"I——" He was about to say that he could do nothing of the sort, but something made him halt. "Has Reivers broken his word to you—about leaving you alone?"

"No, no! He's—he's left me alone. He's scarcely spoken to me half a dozen times."

Toppy looked down at her for several seconds.

"But you've begun to care for Reivers, haven't you?" he said.

The girl looked up at him uncertainly.

"I don't know. Oh, I don't know! I don't seem to have any will of my own toward him. I seem to see him as a different man. I know I shouldn't; but I can't help it, I can't help it! He—he looks at me, and I feel as if—as if—" her voice died down to a horrified whisper—"I were nothing, and his wishes were the only things in the world."

Toppy bowed his head.

"Then I guess there's nothing for me to say."

"Don't!" she cried, stretching out her hand to restrain him as he turned away. "Don't leave me—like that. You're so rude to me lately. I feel so terribly alone when you—aren't nice to me."

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"What difference can I make?" he said bitterly. "I'm not Reivers."

She looked up at him again.

"Oh!" she cried suddenly. "Won't you help me, Mr. Treplin? Can't you help me?"

"Help you?" gasped Toppy. "May I? Can I? What can I do?"

He leaned toward her eagerly.

"What can I do?" he repeated.

"Oh, I don't know!" she murmured in anguish. "But if you—if you leave me—— Oh! What was that?"

From the direction of the quarry had come a great scream of terror, as if many men suddenly had cried out in fear of their lives. Then, almost ere the echoes had died away, came another sound, of more sinister significance to Toppy. There was a sudden low rumble; the earth under their feet trembled; then the noise of a crash and a thud. Then it was still again.

A chill seemed to pass over the entire camp. Men began running toward the quarry with swift steps, their faces showing that they dreaded what they expected to see. Toppy and Campbell looked silently at one another.

"Go into the office," he said quietly to the girl. "Come on, Scotty; that roof's caved in." And without another word they ran swiftly toward the quarry. As they reached the river-bank they heard Reivers' voice quietly issuing orders.

"You guards pick those two fellows up and carry them to their bunks. You scum that's left, pick up your tools and dig into that fallen rock. Hustle now! Get right back to work!"

The first thing that Toppy saw as he turned the shoulder of the ledge was that two of the older Slavs were lying groaning on the ground to one side of where the pit mouth had been. Then he saw what was left of the pit. The entire side of the ledge had caved down, and where the pit had been was only a jumbled pile of jagged rock. Reivers stood in his old position before the pile. The hawk-nosed shotgun guard stood up on the little rise, his weapon ready. The remaining workmen were huddled together before the pile of fallen stone. The terror in their faces was unspeakable. They were like lost, driven cattle facing the butcher's hammer.

"Grab those tools there! Get at it! The rock's right in front of you now! Get busy!" Reivers' voice in no way admitted that anything startling had occurred. He glared at the cowering men, and in terror they began hastily to resume their interrupted work, filling their wheelbarrows from the pile of stone before them. Reivers turned toward Toppy who had bent over the injured men. "Hello, Dr. Treplin," he laughed lightly. "A couple of jobs there for you to experiment on. Get 'em out of here—to their bunks; they're in the way. Patch 'em up if you can. If you can't, they're not much loss, anyhow. They're rather older than I like 'em."

The last words came carelessly over his shoulder as he turned back toward the men who were toiling at the rock. A string of curses rolled coldly from his lips. They leaped to obey him. He smiled contemptuously.

Toppy was relieved to see that the two men on the ground were apparently not fatally hurt. With the aid of Campbell and two guards who had run up he hurried to have the men placed in their bunks in the stockade. One of the guards produced a surgeon's kit. Toppy rolled up his sleeves. It wasn't as bad as he had feared it would be, apparently; only two injured, where he had looked for some surely to be killed. One of the men was growing faint from loss of blood from a wound in his right leg. Toppy, turning his attention to him first, swiftly slit open the trousers-leg and bared the injured limb.

"What—what the devil?" he cried aghast. The calf of the man's leg was half torn away, and from knee to ankle the flesh was sprinkled with buckshot-holes.

"They shot you?" he asked as he fashioned a tourniquet.

"Yes, bahss. Snow-Burner say, 'Get t' 'ell in there.' Rocks fall; we no go in. Snow-Burner hold up hand. Man with gun shoot. I fall. Other men go in. Pretty soon rocks fall. Other men come out. He shoot me. I no do anything; he shoot me."

Toppy choked back the curse that rose to his lips, dressed the man's wound to the best of his slight ability, and turned to the other, who had been caught in the cave-in of the quarry-roof. His right leg and 'arm were broken, and the side was crushed in a way that suggested broken ribs. Toppy filled a hypodermic syringe and went to work to make the two as comfortable as he knew how. That was all he could pretend to do. Yet when he left the stockade it

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was with a feeling of relief that he looked back over the morning. The worst had happened; the danger to the men was over; and, so far as Toppy knew, the consequences were represented in the two men whom he had treated and who, so far as he could see, were sure to live. It hadn't turned out as badly as he was afraid it would.

As he passed the carpenter-shop he saw the "wood-butcher" sawing two boards to make a cover for a long, narrow box. Toppy looked at him idly, trying to think of what such a box could be used for around the camp. It was too narrow for its length to be of ordinary use as a box.

"What are you making there?" asked Toppy carelessly.

The "wood-butcher" looked up from his sawing.

"Didn't you ever see a logging-camp coffin?" he asked. "We always keep a few ready. This one is for that Bohunk that's down there under the rocks."

"Under the rocks!" cried Toppy. "You don't mean to say there was anybody under that cave-in!"

"Is yet," was the laconic reply. "One of 'em was caught 'way inside. Whole roof on top of him. Won't find him till the pit's emptied."

Toppy struggled a moment to speak quietly.

"Which one was it, do you know?" he asked.

"Oh, it was that old brown-complected fellow," said the carpenter. "That old Bohunk guy with the big rings in his ears."

REIVERS came to the shop at his customary time in the evening, nothing in his manner containing a hint that anything unusual had happened during the day. He found a solemn and silent pair, for Campbell had sought relief from the day's tragedy in his customary manner and sat in the light of the student-lamp steadily reading his Bible, while Toppy, in a dark corner, sat with his great shoulders hunched forward, his folded hands before him, and stared at the floor. Reivers paused in the doorway, his cold smile broadening as he surveyed the pair.

"Poker tonight—doctor?" he said softly, and the slur in his tones was like blasphemy toward all that men hold sacred.

"No, by ——, no!" growled Toppy.

Laughing lightly, Reivers closed the door and came across the room.

"What? Aren't you going to give me my revenge—doctor?" The manner in which he accented "doctor" was worse than an open insult.

Old Campbell peered over his thick glasses.

"The sword of judgment is sharpening for you, Mr. Reivers," he said solemnly. "You ha' this day sealed your own doom. A life for a life; and you have taken a life today unnecessarily. It is the holy law; you will pay. It is so written."

"Yes, yes, yes!" laughed Reivers in great amusement. "But you've said that so many times before in just that same way, Scotty. Can't you evolve a new idea? Or at least sing it in a different key?"

The old Scot looked at him without wavering or changing his expression.

"You are the smartest man I have ever known, Mr. Reivers, and the domdest fool," he said in the same tone. "Do you fancy yourself more than mortal? Losh, man! A knife in the bowels, or a bullet or ax in the head will as readily make you a bit of poor clay as you've this day made yon poor old Bohunk."

Reivers listened courteously to the end, waiting even a moment to be sure that Campbell had had his say.

"And you—doctor?" he said turning to Toppy. "What melancholy thoughts have you to utter?"

Toppy said nothing.

"Oh, come, Treplin!" said Reivers lightly. "Surely you're not letting a little thing like that quarry-incident give you a bad evening? Where's your philosophy, man? Consider the thing intelligently instead of sentimentally. There was so much rock to go into that dam in a day—and incidentally today finished the job. That was a useful, necessary work.

"For that old man to continue in this life was not useful or necessary. He was far down in the order of human development; centuries below you and me. Do you think it made the slightest difference whether he returned to the old cosmic mud whence he came, and from which he had not come far, in today's little cave-in, or in a dirty bed, say ten years from now?

"He accomplished a tiny speck of useful work, through my direction. He has gone, as the wood will soon be gone that is heating

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that stove. There was no spirit there; only a body that has ceased to stand upright. And you grow moody over it! Well, well! I'm more and more disappointed in you—doctor."

Toppy said nothing. He was biding his time.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SCREWS TIGHTEN

THAT night came the heavy snow for which the loggers had been waiting, and a rush of activity followed in Hell Camp. The logs which had lain in the woods for want of sleighing now were accessible. Following the snow came hard, freezing nights, and the main ice-roads which Reivers had driven into the timber for miles became solid beds of ice over which a team could haul log loads to the extent of a carload weight. It was ideal logging-weather, and the big camp began to hum.

The mastery of Reivers once more showed itself in the way in which he drove his great crew at top speed and beyond. The feeling against him on the part of the men had risen to silent, tight-lipped heat as the news went around of how the old Magyar with the ear-rings had met his death. Each man in camp knew that he might have been in the old man's shoes; each knew that Reivers' anger might fall on him next. In the total of a hundred and fifty men in camp there was probably not one who did not curse Reivers and rage against his rule, and there were few who, if the opportunity had offered, would not cheerfully have taken his life.

The feeling against him had unified itself. Before, the men had been split into various groups on the subject of the boss. They remained divided now, but on one thing they were unanimous: the Snow-Burner had gone too far to bear. Men sat on the bunk-edges in the stockade and cursed as they thought of the boss and the shotgun guards that rendered them helpless. Reivers permitted no firearms of any kind in camp save those that were carried by his gunmen.

The gunmen when not on guard kept to their quarters, in the building just outside of the stockade gate, where Reivers also lived. When armed, they were ordered to permit no man to approach nearer than ten feet to them—this to prevent a possible rushing and wresting the weapons from their hands. So long as the guards were there in possession of their shotguns the men knew that they were helpless. Driven to desperation now, they prayed for the chance to get those guns into their own hands. After that they promised themselves that the score of brutality would be made even.

Then came the time for rush work, and under the lash of Reivers' will the outraged men, carried off their feet, were driven with a ferocity that told how completely Reivers ignored the spirit of revolt which he knew was fomenting against him. He quit playing with them, as he expressed it; he began to drive.

Long before daylight began to gray the sky above the eastern timber-line the men were out at their posts, waiting for sufficient light to begin the day's work. Once the work began it went ahead with a fury that seemed to carry all men with it. Reivers was everywhere that a man dared to pause for a moment to shirk his job. He used his hands now, for a broken leg or rib laid a man up, and he had use for the present for every man he could muster. He scarcely looked at the men he hit, breaking their faces with a sudden, treacherous blow, cursing them coldly until, despite their injuries, they leaped at their work, then whirling away to fall upon some other luckless one elsewhere.

He was a fury, a merciless elemental force, with no consideration for the strength and endurance of men; sparing no one any more than he spared himself, and rushing his whole force along at top speed by sheer power of the spirit of leadership that possessed him. Men ceased for the time being to growl and pray that the Snow-Burner would get his just due. They had no thought nor energies for anything but keeping pace in the whirlwind rush of work through which the Snow-Burner drove them.

In the blacksmith-shop the same condition prevailed as elsewhere in the camp. The extra hurry of the work in the timber meant extra accidents, which meant breakages. There were chain-links to be forged and fitted to broken chains; sharp two-inch calks to be driven into the horses' shoes, peaveys and cant-hooks to be repaired. Besides the regular blacksmith-work of the camp, which was quite sufficient to keep

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Campbell and one helper comfortably employed, there was now added each day a bulk of extra work due to the strain under which men, horses and tools were working.

Old Campbell, grimly resolute that Reivers should have no excuse to fall foul of him, drove himself and his helper at a speed second only to that with which he had so roughly greeted Toppy to the rough world of bodily labor. But the Toppy who now hammered and toiled at Campbell's side was a different man from the champagne-softened youth who had come into camp a little while before. The puffiness was gone from under his eyes, the looseness from his lips and the fat from around the middle. Through his veins the blood now surged with no taint of cumbering poison; his tissues tingled with life and healthiness.

Day by day he did his share and more in the shop-work, and instead of the old feeling of fatigue, which before had followed any prolonged exertion, felt his muscles spring with hardness and new life at each demand made upon them. The old joy of a strong man in his strength came back in him. Stripped to the waist he stretched himself and filled his great lungs with deep drafts, his arms like beams stretched out and above his head. Under the clean skin, rosy and moist from exertion, the muscles bunched and relaxed, tautened instantly to iron hardness or rippled softly as they were called upon, in the perfect coördination which results in great athletes. Old Campbell, similarly stripped, stared at the marvel of a giant's perfect torso, beside which his own work-wrought body was ugly in its unequal development.

"Losh, man! But you're full grown!" he growled in admiration. "I've seen but one man who could strip anywhere near to you."

"Who was he?" asked Toppy.

"The Snow-Burner."

Day by day Toppy hammered and labored at Campbell's side, holding his end up against the grim old smith, and day by day he felt his muscles growing toward that iron condition in which there is no tiring. Presently, to Scotty's vexation, he was doing more than his share, ending the day with a laugh and waking up in the morning as fresh as if he had not taxed his energies the day before.

At first he continued to favor his injured ankle, lest a sudden strain delay its recovery. Each night he massaged and bandaged it scientifically. Later on, when he felt that it was stronger, he began to exercise it, slowly raising and lowering himself on the balls of his feet. In a couple of weeks the old spring and strength had largely come back, and Campbell snorted in disgust at the antics indulged in by his helper when the day's work was done.

"Skipping a rope one, twa hundred times! What brand o' silliness do ye call that?" he grumbled. "Ha' ye nothing useful to do wi' them long legs of yourn, that you have to make a jumping-jack out o' yourself?"

At which Toppy smiled grimly and continued his training.

The rush of work had its compensations. Reivers, driving his force like mad, had no time to waste either in bantering Toppy and Campbell in the evening or in paying attention to Miss Pearson. All the power that was in the Snow-Burner was concentrated upon the problem of getting out every stick of timber possible while the favorable weather continued. He spent most of his time in the timber up-river where the heaviest logging was going on.

By day he raged in the thick of the men with only one thought or aim—to get out the logs as fast as human and horse-power could do it. At night the road-crews, repairing with pick and shovel and sprinkling-tanks the wear and tear of the day's hauling, worked under Reivers' compelling eyes. All night long the sprinkling-tanks went up and down the ice-coated roads, and the drivers, freezing on the seats, were afraid to stop or nod, not knowing when the Snow-Burner might step out from the shadows and catch them in the act.

The number of accidents, always too plentiful in logging-camps, multiplied, but Reivers permitted nothing short of broken bones to send a man to his bunk. Toppy, besides his work in the shop, cared as best he could for the disabled. Reivers had no time to waste that way now. The two men hurt at the quarry were recovering rapidly. One day a tall, lean "white man," a Yankee top-loader, came hobbling out of the woods with his foot dangling at the ankle, and mumbling curses through a smashed jaw.

"How did you get this?" asked Toppy, as he dressed the cruelly crushed foot.

"Pinched between two logs," mumbled the man. "They let one come down the skids when I wasn't lookin'. No fault of

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mine; I didn't have time to jump. And then, when I'm standin' there leanin' against a tree, that devil Reivers comes up and hands me this." He pointed to his cracked jaw. "He'll teach me to get myself hurt, he says. ——! That ain't no man; he's a devil! By ——! I know what I'd ruther have than the wages comin' to me, and that's a rifle with one good cattridge in it and that —— standin' afore me."

YET that evening, when Reivers came to the top-loader's bunk and demanded how long he expected to lie there eating his head off, the man cringed and whimpered that he would be back on the job as soon as his foot was fit to stand on. In Reivers' presence the men were afraid to call their thoughts their own, but behind his back the mumblings and grumblings of hatred were growing to a volume which inevitably soon must break out in the hell-yelp of a mob ripe for murder.

Reivers knew it better than any man in camp. To indicate how it affected him he turned the screws on tighter than ever. Once, at least, "they had him dead," as they admitted, when he stood ankle-deep in the river with the saw-logs thundering over the rollways to the brink of the bluff above his head. One cunning twist of a peavey would have sent a dozen logs tumbling over the brink on his head. Reivers sensed his danger and looked up. He smiled. Then he turned and deliberately stood with his back to the men. And no man dared to give his peavey that one cunning twist.

During these strenuous days Toppy tried in vain to muster up sufficient courage to reopen the conversation with Miss Pearson which had been so suddenly interrupted by the cave-in at the quarry. He saw her every day. She had changed greatly from the high-spirited, self-reliant girl who had stood on the steps of the hotel back at Rail Head and told the whole world by her manner that she was accustomed and able to take care of herself. A stronger will than hers had entered her scheme of life.

Although she knew now that Reivers had tricked her into coming to Hell Camp because he was confident of winning her, the knowledge made no difference. The will of the man dominated and fascinated her. She feared him, yet she was drawn toward him despite her struggles. She fought hard against the inclination to yield to the stronger will, to let her feelings make her his willing slave, as she knew he wished. The pain of the struggle shone in her eyes. Her cheeks lost their bloom; there were lines about the little mouth.

Toppy saw it, but an unwonted shyness had come upon him. He could no longer speak to her with the frank friendliness of their previous conversations. Something which he could not place had, he felt, set them apart.

Perhaps it was the fact that he saw the fascinations which Reivers had for her. Reivers was his enemy. They had been enemies from the moment when they first had measured each other eye to eye. He felt that he had one aim in life now, and one only; that was to prove to himself and to Reivers that Reivers was not his master.

Beyond that he had no plans. He knew that this meant a grapple which must end with one of them broken and helpless. The unfortunate one might be himself. In that case there would be no need to think of the future, and it would be just as well not to have spoken any more with the girl.

It might be Reivers. Then he would be guilty in her eyes of having injured the man for whom the girl now obviously had feelings which Toppy could construe in but one way. She cared for Reivers, in spite of herself; and she would not be inclined to friendliness toward the man who had conquered him, if conquered he should be.

The more Toppy thought it over the less enviable, to his notion, became his standing with the girl. He ended by resolutely determining to put her out of his thoughts. After all, he was no girl's man. He had no business trying to be. For the present he saw one task laid out before him as inevitable as a revealed fate—to prove himself with Reivers, to get to grips with the cold-blooded master-man who had made him feel, with every man in camp, that the place veritably was a Hell Camp.

Reivers' brutal dominance lay like a tangible weight upon Toppy's spirit. He longed for only one thing—for the opportunity to stand up eye to eye with him and learn who was the better man. Beyond that he did not see, nor care. He had given up any thought that the girl might ever care for him.

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CHAPTER XVII

TILLY'S WARNING

NOVEMBER passed, and the first half of December. The shortest days of the year were approaching, and still the cold, crisp weather, ideal for logging, continued without a break. Hell Camp continued to hum with its abnormal activity. A thaw which would spoil the sleighing and ice-roads for the time being was long overdue. With the coming of the thaw would come a temporary lull in the work of the camp.

The men prayed for the thaw; Reivers asked that the cold weather continue. It had continued now longer than he had expected or hoped, and the output of the camp already was double that of what would have been successful logging at that season. But Reivers was not satisfied. The record that he was setting served only to spur his ambition to desperation.

The longer the cold spell hung on the harder he drove. Each day, as he looked at the, low, gray sky and saw that there were no signs of a break-up, he turned to and set the pace a little faster than the day before. The madness of achievement, the passion to use his powers to accomplish the impossible, the characteristics which had won him the name of Snow-Burner, were in possession. He was doing the impossible; he was accomplishing what no other man could do, what all men said was impossible; and the feat only created a hunger to do more.

The men were past grumbling now, too tired of body and too crushed of mind to give expression to their feelings. So long as the rush of work continued they were as harmless as harnessed and driven cattle, incapable of anything more than keeping step in the mad march that the Snow-Burner was leading. But all men knew that with the coming of a thaw and the cessation of work would come an explosion of the murderous hatred which Reivers' tactics had driven into the hearts of the men. Now and then a man, driven to a state of desperation which excluded the possibility of fear, stopped and rebelled. One day a young swamper, a gangling lad of twenty, raging and weeping, threw himself upon Reivers like a cat upon a bear. Reivers, with a laugh, thrust him off and kicked him out of the way. Another time a huge Slav sprang at him with his razor-edged ax upraised, and, quailing before Reivers' calm look, hurled the ax away with a scream and ran blindly away into the trackless woods. Three days later, starving and with frozen hands and feet, he came stumbling up to the stockade and fell in a lump.

"Feed him up," ordered Reivers, smiling. "I've got a little use for him when he's fixed up so he can feel. You see, Treplin," he continued to Toppy, who had been called to bring the man back to life, "I'm not all cruelty. When I want to save a man to amuse myself with I'm almost as much of a humanitarian as you are."

He hurried on his way, but before he was out of hearing he flung back—

"You remember how carefully I had Tilly nurse you, don't you—doctor?"

It was only the guards that Reivers did not make enemies of. He knew that he had need of their loyalty. At night the "white men" sat on the edges of their bunks and tried to concoct feasible schemes for securing possession of the shotguns of the guards.

On the morning of the shortest day of the year Toppy heard a scratching sound at the window near his bunk and sprang up. It was still pitch dark, long before any one should be stirring around camp save the cook and cookees.

"Who's there?" demanded Toppy.

"Me. Want talk um with you," came the low response from without. "You no come out. No make noise. Hear through window. You can hear um when I talk, huh?"

"Tilly!" gasped Toppy. "What's up?"

"You hear um what I talk?" asked the squaw again.

"Yes, yes; I can hear you. What is it?"

"You like um li'l Miss Pearson, huh?" said Tilly bluntly.

"What?" Toppy's heart was pounding with sudden excitement. "What—what's up, Tilly? There hasn't anything happened to Miss Pearson, has there?"

"Uh! You like um Miss Pearson? Tell um Tilly straight or Tilly go 'way and no talk um more with you. You like her? Huh?"

"Yes," said Toppy breathlessly, after a long pause. "Yes, I like her. What is it?"

"You no like see um Miss Pearson get hurt?"

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"No, no; of course not. Who's going to hurt her?"

"Snow-Burner," said Tilly. "Tilly tell you this before she go 'way. Tilly going 'way now. Tilly going 'way far off to father's tepee. Snow-Burner tell um me go. Snow-Burner tell um me go last night. Snow-Burner say he no want Tilly stay in camp longer. Tilly know why Snow-Burner no want her stay in camp. Snow-Burner through with Tilly. Snow-Burner now want um Miss Pearson. So."

"Tilly! Hold on!" She had already turned away, but she halted at his voice and came close to the window. "What is this? Are you going away at once—because the Snow-Burner says so?"

The squaw nodded, stoically submissive.

"Snow-Burner say 'go'; Tilly go," she said. "Snow-Burner say go before any one see um me this morning. I go now. Must go; Snow-Burner say so."

"And Miss Pearson?" whispered Toppy frantically. "Did he say anything about her?"

Tilly nodded heavily.

"Tell um me long 'go. Tell um me before Miss Pearson come. Tell um me he going marry Miss Pearson for um Christmas present. Christmas Day come soon now. Snow-Burner no want Tilly here then. Send Tilly 'way."

The breath seemed to leave Toppy's body for an instant. He swayed and caught at the window-frame.

"Marry her—Christmas Day?" he whispered, horrified.

"Yes. He no tell um Miss Pearson yet. He tell me no tell um her, no tell um anybody. I tell you. Now go."

Before Toppy had sufficiently recovered his wits to speak again he heard the crunch of her moccasins on the snow dying away in the darkness as the cast-off squaw stolidly started on her journey into the woods.

"Tilly!" called Toppy desperately, but there was no answer.

"What's matter?" murmured Campbell, disturbed in his deep slumber, and falling to sleep again before he received a reply.

TOPPY stood for a long time with his face held close to the window through which he had heard Tilly's startling news. The shock had numbed him. Although he had been prepared to expect anything of Reivers, he now realized that this was something more than he had thought possible even from him. The Snow-Burner—marry Miss Pearson—for a Christmas present—Christmas Day! He seemed to hear Tilly repeating the words over and over again. And Reivers had not even so much as told Miss Pearson of what he intended to do. He had not even told her that he intended to marry her. So Tilly said, and Tilly knew. What did Reivers intend to do then? How did he know he was going to marry her? How did he know she would have him?

Toppy shivered a little as his wits began to work more clearly, and the full significance of the situation began to grow clear to him. He understood now. Reivers had good reason for making his plans so confidently. He had studied the girl until he had seen that his will had dominated hers; that though she might not love him, might even fear him, she had not the will-power against him to say nay to his wishes.

He knew that she was helplessly fascinated, that she was his for the taking. He had been too busy to take her until now; the serious duties of his position had allowed no time for dalliance. So the girl had been safe and unmolested—until now! And now Reivers was secretly preparing to make her his own!

A sudden thought struck Toppy, and he tiptoed to the door and looked out. Instead of the crisp coldness of recent mornings there was a warm mugginess in the air; and Toppy, bending down, placed his hand on the snow and felt that it had begun to soften. The thaw had come.

"I thought so," he said to himself. "The work will break up now, and he's going to amuse himself. Well, he made a mistake when he told Tilly. She's been civilized just enough to make her capable of jealousy."

He went back to his bunk and dressed.

"What are you stirring around so early for?" grumbled Campbell. "Dinna ye get work enough during the day, to be getting up in the dark?"

"The thaw's come," said Toppy, throwing on his cap. "There'll be something doing besides work now."

He went out into the dark morning, crossed the road and softly tried the door to the office. He felt much better when he had assured himself that the door was securely

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locked on the inside. Then he returned to the shop and waited for the daylight to appear.

CHAPTER XVIII

"CANNY BY NATURE"

OLD Campbell arose at his usual time, surprised and pleased to find that Toppy had breakfast already cooked and on the table. Being a canny Scot, he did not express his surprise or pleasure, but proceeded to look about for signs to indicate the reason of Toppy's unwonted conduct. All that he could make out was that Toppy's eyes were bright with some sort of excitement, and that the grim set of his mouth had given way to an expression of relief. So the Scot sat down to eat, shaking his gray head in puzzled fashion.

"I dinna see that this thaw should be any reason for your parading around before the night's done," he grumbled. "Were you so tired of a little useful work that ye maun greet a let-down with such early rising?"

Toppy sat down and proceeded to breakfast without venturing a reply. When they had finished the meal he pushed back his chair and looked across at Campbell. Huge and careless, he sprawled in his chair, the tension and uncertainty gone now that he had made his resolution; and Campbell, studying his face, sensed that something was up and leaned forward eagerly.

"I want to lay off today, Scotty," said Toppy deliberately. "I've got a little business that I want to settle with Reivers."

Old Campbell did not start nor in any way indicate surprise.

"Aye!" he said quietly after a pause. "I ha' seen from the first it would have to be that in the end. Ye maun settle which is best man. But why today?"

"Because now that the thaw has spoiled the sleighing Reivers will have time for deviltry." And Toppy went on and told all that he had heard from Tilly's lips that morning. Campbell shook his head angrily as he heard.

"Many things has the Snow-Burner done ill," he said, "and his sins against men and women cry for punishment; but that—to yon little lass—gi'n he did that, that would be worst of all. What are your plans, lad?"

"Nothing," said Toppy. "I will go and find him, and we'll have it out."

"Not so," said Campbell swiftly. "Gi'n you did that 'twould cost you your life did you chance to win o'er him. Do you think those devils with the guns would not murder to win favor of the Snow-Burner, him holding the lives and liberty of all of them in his hands as he does? Nay, lad! Fight ye must; you're both too big and spirited to meet without coming to grips; but you have aye the need of an old head on your side if you're to stand up with Reivers on even terms.

"What think you he would fancy, did you go to him with a confident bold challenge as you suggest? That you had a trick up your sleeve, with the men in on it, perhaps; and he'd have the guards there with their guns to see he won as sure as we're sitting here talking. No; I ha' seen for weeks 'twas coming on, and I ha' been using this auld head o' mine. I may even say I ha' been doing more than thinking; I ha' been talking. I have told Reivers that you were becoming unbearable in this shop, and that I could not stand you much longer as my helper."

Toppy looked across the table, amazed and pained.

"Why—what's wrong, Scotty?" he stammered.

"Tush, lad!" snapped the old man. "Dinna think I meant it. I only told Reivers so for the effect."

Toppy was bewildered.

"I don't see what you're driving at, Scotty."

"Listen, then; I ha' told Reivers that you were getting the swell head so bad there was no working you. I ha' told him you were at heart nothing but a fresh young whiffet who needed taming, and gi'n he made me keep you here I mysel' would do the taming with an ax-handle. Do you begin to get my drift now, lad?"

"I confess I don't," admitted Toppy.

"Well, then—Reivers said: 'That's how I sized him up, too. But don't you do the taming, Campbell,' says he. 'I am saving him for mysel',' he says. 'But I will not put up with his lip longer,' said I. 'Man, Reivers,' I says, 'he thinks he's a fighter, and the other day I slammed him on his back mysel'; and gi'n I had my old wind,' I says, 'I would have whipped him then and there.'

"Oh, I carried on strong, losing my temper and all. 'Five year ago I would ha' broken his back, the big young fool!' I says.

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'An' he swaggers around me and thinks he's a boss man because he licked that bloat Sheedy. Ah!' I says. 'I'll stand it till he gives me lip again; then I'll lay him out with whatever I have in my hands,' says I.

" 'Don't do it,' says Reivers, smiling to see me so worked up, and surmising, as I intended he should, that I was angry only because I'd discovered that you were a better man than mysel'. 'Save him for me,' says he. 'As soon as I have more time I will 'tend to him. In the meantime,' he says, 'let him go on thinking he is a good man.'

"Lad, he swallowed it all, for it's four years since he knew me first, and that was the first lie I'd told him at all. 'I'll take him under my eye soon as I have more time,' says he. 'He'll not swagger after I've tamed him a little.' "

"But I don't just see——"

"Dolt! Dinna you see that noo he considers you as an overconfident young fool whom he's going to take the conceit out of? Dinna ye see that noo you're in the same category as the other men he's broken down? He'll not think it worth while to have his shotgun men handy noo when he starts in to do his breaking. He'll start it, ye understand; not you. 'Twill be proper so. I will go this morning and tell him that the end has come; that I can not stand you longer around me. He'll give you something to do—under him. Under him, do you see? Then you must e'en watch your chance, and—and happen I'll manage to be around in case the guards should show up."

"Better keep out of it altogether," said Toppy. "They won't use their guns in an even fight, and you couldn't do anything with your bare hands if they did."

"With my bare hands, no," said Campbell, going to his bunk. "But I am not so bare-handed as you think, lad." He dug under the blankets and held up a huge black revolver. "Canny by nature!" he said, thrusting the grim weapon under his trousers-band. "I made no idle threat when I told Reivers I would shoot his head off did he ever try to make a broken man out of me. I have had this utensil handy ever since."

"Scotty," cried Toppy, deeply moved at the old man's stanch friendship, "when did you begin to plan this scheme?"

Campbell looked squarely into his eyes. "The same day that I talked with yon lassie and learned how Reivers had fascinated her."

"Why?"

"Dinna ye know nothing about women, lad?"

"I—— What do you mean?"

"Do you fancy Reivers could carry his will so strong with folks gi'n ye happen to make a beaten man out of him? And do you not think yon lass would come back to her right mind gi'n the Snow-Burner loses his power o'er her? You're no' so blind as not to see she's no liking for him, but the de'il has in a way mesmerized her."

"Then you mean——"

"That when you and the Snow-Burner put up your mitts ye'll be fighting for more than just to see who's best man. Now think that over, lad, while I go and complain to Reivers that I can not stand you an hour longer, and arrange for him to give you your taming."

CHAPTER XIX

THE FIGHT

IT WAS past sunrise now; the mugginess in the air had fled before the unclouded sun, and the day was pleasantly bright and warm. The sunlight coming in through the eastern window flooded the room. Outside could be heard the steady *drip-drip* from the melting icicles, and the chirp of the chickadees industriously seeking a breakfast around the door made the morning cheery.

Toppy sat heaved forward in his chair after Campbell had gone on his errand, and looked out of the open door, and waited. From where he sat he could see the office across the way. Presently he saw Miss Pearson come out, stand for a moment in the doorway peering around in puzzled fashion, and go in again.

Toppy did not move. He knew what that signified—that the girl was puzzled and perhaps frightened over the absence of the squaw, Tilly; but he had no impulse to cross the street and break the news to her. The girl, Tilly's absence, such things were to him only incidentals now. He saw the girl as if far away, as if she were something that did not greatly concern him.

Through his mind there ran recollections of other moments like this—moments of waiting in the training-quarters back at

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school for the word of the coach to trot out on the field. The same ease of spirit after the tension of weeks of hard training; the same sinking of all worry and nervousness in the knowledge that now that the test was on he would do the best that was in him, and that beyond this there was nothing for a man to think or worry about.

Back there at school there had also been that sense of dissociation from all things not involved in the contest before him. The roaring stands, the pretty girls waving the bright-hued banners, the sound of his name shouted far down the field—he had heard them, but they had not affected him. For the time being, then as now, he had become a wonderful human machine, completely concentrated, as machines must be, upon the accomplishment of one task. Then it had been to play a game; now it was to fight. But it was much the same, after all; it was all in the man-game.

A feeling of content was the only emotion that Toppy was conscious of in the long minutes during which he waited for Campbell to return. The *drip-drip* from the eaves and the chirp of the chickadees came as music to his ears. The Snow-Burner and he were going to fight; in that knowledge there was relief after the weeks of tension.

Heavy, crunching steps sounded on the snow outside, and Campbell's broad shoulders filled the doorway. Toppy bent over and carefully tightened a shoe-lace.

"It's all set," said Campbell rapidly. "He says send you to him at once. You're in luck. He's in the stockade. Get you up and go to him. There is only one guard at the gate. I'll follow and be handy in case he should interfere."

That was all. Toppy rose up and strode out without a word. He made his way to the stockade gate with a carelessness of manner that belied his purpose. He noted that the guard stood on the outside of the gate and that the snow already was squashy underfoot. The gate opened and admitted him and closed behind him. Then he was walking across the yard toward Reivers, who stood waiting before the camp kitchen at the far end of the yard.

Here and there Toppy saw men in the bunkhouses, perhaps fifty in all, and realized that the sudden thaw had at once enforced a period of idleness for some of the men. He nodded lightly in response to the greeting from one of the men whom he had doctored; then he was standing before Reivers, and Reivers was looking at him as he had looked at Rosky the day when he broke the Bohunk's leg. Toppy looked back, unmoved. For a moment the two stood silent, eye measuring eye. Then Reivers spoke savagely, enraged at finding a will that braved his own.

"What kind of a game are you trying to play, Treplin?"

"Game?" repeated Toppy innocently.

"Come, come!" Reivers' brows were drawing down over his eyes, and again Toppy for some reason was reminded of a bear. "You don't suppose I'm as innocent as Campbell, do you? You've been raising —— in the shop, I hear. You're doing that with an object. You're trying some game. I don't care what it is; it doesn't go. There doesn't anybody try any games in this place except myself."

"How about poker-games?" suggested Toppy quietly.

A man hidden in the darkness of the bunkhouse behind Reivers snickered audibly; for Campbell had told the story of how Toppy had bested the boss at poker and the man understood Toppy's thrust. Reivers' eyes flashed and his jaw shot out, but in an instant he had his anger under control again. He smiled.

"Well, well; so we're playing the wit, are we—doctor?" he sneered softly. "We're trying to drive that trained mind of ours to be brilliant, are we? Well, I wouldn't, Treplin; the strain on inferior machinery may be fatal." Suddenly his whole face seemed to change, convulsed in a spasm of brute threatening. "Get over there in that corner and dig a slop-sink; you hear me?" Reivers' voice was a snarl as he pointed to the corner near the kitchen, where a pick and shovel lay waiting. "That's what you're going to do, my fine buck, with your nerve to dare to come into my camp and think you're my equal. Dig slop-holes for my Dago cook; that's what you're going to do!

"Do you hear? You're going to be the lowest scavenger in this gang of scum. I'm going to break you. I'm going to keep you here until I'm through with you. I'm going to send you out of here so low down that a saloon scrub-out would kick you on general principles. That's what's going to happen to you! I'm going to play with you. I'm going to show you how well it pays to think

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of yourself as my equal in my own camp. Get over there now—right over there where the whole camp can see you, and dig a hole for the Dago to throw his slops!"

Few men could have faced the sight of the Snow-Burner's face as the words shot from his iron-like lips without retreating, but Toppy stood still. He began to smile.

"Pardon, Reivers," he said softly, "I never thought of myself as your equal."

"Don't whine now; it's too late! Get——"

"Because I know I'm a better man than you ever could be."

IT GREW very still with great suddenness there in the corner of the big yard. The men within hearing held their breaths. The *drip-drip* from the eaves sounded loud in the silence. And now Toppy saw the wolf-craft creeping to its own far back in Reivers' eyes, and without moving he stood tensed for sudden, flash-like action.

"So that's it?" said Reivers, smiling; and then he struck with serpent-tongue swiftness. And with that blow Toppy knew how desperate would be the battle; for, skilled boxer and on the alert as he was, he had time only to snap his jaw to one side far enough to save himself from certain knock-out, while the iron-like fist tore the skin off his cheek as it shot past.

Reivers had not thrown his body behind the blow. He stood upright and ready. He was a little surprised that his man did not go down. Toppy, recovering like a flash, likewise was prepared. A tiny instant they faced each other. Then with simultaneous growls they hurled themselves breast to breast and the fight was on.

Toppy had yielded to the impulse to answer in kind the challenge that had flared in Reivers' eyes. It wasn't science; it wasn't sense. It was the blind, primitive impulse to come into shock with a foe, to stop him, to force him back, to make him break ground. Breast upon breast Reivers and Toppy came together and stopped short, two bodies of equal force suddenly meeting.

Neither gave ground; neither made a pretense at guarding. Toe to toe they stood, head to head, and drove their fists against one another's iron-strong bodies with a rapidity and a force that only giants like themselves could have withstood for a moment. It was madness, it was murder; and the group of men who were watching held their breaths and waited for one or the other to wilt and go down, the life knocked out of him by those pile-driver blows.

Then, as suddenly as they had come together, the pair leaped apart, rushed together again, gripped into a clinch, struggled in Titan fashion with futile heaving and tripping, flew apart once more, then volleyed each other with vicious punches—a kaleidoscope of springing legs, rushing bodies, and stiffly driven arms.

It was a battle that drove the fear of Reivers from the heart of the men who witnessed and dragged them forth to form a ring around the two fighters. It was a battle to make men roar with frenzy; but not a sound came from the ring that expanded and closed as the battle raged here and there. The men were at first too shocked to cry out at the sight of any one daring to give the Snow-Burner fight; and after the shock had worn away they were too wary to give a sign that might bring the guards. Silently and tight-lipped the ring formed; and each pair of eyes that watched shot nothing but hatred for Reivers.

Toppy was the first to recover from the initial frenzied impulse to strive to annihilate in one rush his hated enemy. He shook his head as he was wont to do after a hard scrimmage on the gridiron, and his fighting-wits were clear again. So far he knew he had held his own, but only held it. Perhaps he outbulked Reivers slightly in body and was a trifle quicker on his feet, but Reivers' blows were enough heavier than his to even up this advantage.

He had driven his fist flush home on his foeman's neck under the ear, and the neck had not yielded any more than a column of wood. He had felt Reivers' fist drive home full on his cheekbone and it seemed that he had been struck by a handful of iron. When they had strained breast against breast in the first clash the fact that they were of equal strength had been apparent to both. Equally matched, and both equally determined to win, Toppy knew that the fight would be long; and he began to circle scientifically, striking and guarding with all his cunning, saving himself while he watched for a slip or an opening that might offer an advantage.

Suddenly the opening came, as Reivers

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for a second paused, deceived by Toppy's tactics. Like a bullet to the mark Toppy's right shot home on the exposed chin; but Reivers, felled to his knees as if shot, was up like a flash, staggering Toppy with a left on the mouth and rushing him around and around in fury at the knockdown. An added grimness to Toppy's expression told how he appreciated the significance of this incident. He had put all his force, from toes to knuckles, into that blow; and Reivers had merely been staggered. Again Toppy began circling, deliberately saving himself for a drawn-out battle which now to him seemed uphill.

The ring of watchers around the pair grew more close, more eager. All of the men present in the bunkhouses had rushed out to see the fight. As Toppy circled he saw in the foremost ranks the Torta boys and most of the gang that had worked under him in the quarry; and by the looks in their eyes he knew that he was fighting in the presence of friends. In the next second their looks had turned to dismay as Reivers, swiftly feinting with his left, drove home the right against Toppy's jaw and knocked him to his haunches. But Toppy, rising slowly, caught Reivers as he closed in to follow up his advantage and with a heavy swing to the eye stopped him in his tracks. A low cry escaped the tight lips around the ring. The blood was spurting from a clean cut in Reivers' brow and a few men called—

"First blood!"

Then Toppy spat out the blood he had held in after Reivers' blow. The feel of the blood running down his face turned Reivers to a fury. He rushed with an impetuosity which nothing could withstand, his fists playing a tattoo on Toppy's head and body. Like a tiger Toppy fought back; but Reivers' rage for the moment had given him added strength. He fought as a man who intends to end a fight in a hurry; he rushed and struck with power to annihilate with one blow, and rushed and struck again.

Toppy was pressed back. A groan came from the crowd as they saw him stagger from a blow on the jaw and saw Reivers set himself for one last desperate effort. Reivers rushed, his face the face of a demon, his left ripping up for the body, his right looping overhand in a killing swing at the head; and then the crowd gasped, for Toppy, with his superior quickness of foot, side-stepped, and as Reivers plunged past dealt him a left in the mouth that flung him half around and sent him staggering against the outheld hands of the crowd.

When Reivers turned around now he was bleeding from the mouth also, and in his eyes was a look of caution that Toppy had never seen there before.

The fight now became as dogged as it was furious. Each man had tried to end it with a single blow and, failing, knew that he must wear his opponent down. Neither had been seriously damaged by the blows struck and neither was in the least tired. The thud of blow followed blow. Back and forth the pair shuffled, first one driving the other with volleys of punches, then his antagonist suddenly turning the tables.

Toppy, feeling that he was fighting an uphill fight, saved himself more than Reivers. The latter, who felt himself the master, became more and more enraged as Toppy continued to stand up before him and give him back as good as he gave. Each time that Toppy reached face or body with a solid blow the savage fury flared in Reivers' eyes, and he lunged forward like a maddened bull. Always, however, he recovered himself and resumed the fight with brains as well as brawn.

Toppy never lost his head after the first wild spasm. He realized that they were so evenly matched that the loser would lose by a slip of the mind by letting some weak spot in his character master him; and he held himself in with an iron will. Reivers' blows goaded and tempted him to rush in madly, but he held back. The men about the ring thought he was losing, and their voices rose in growled encouragement.

Toppy was not losing. As he saw Reivers become more and more furious his hopes began to rise. At each opportunity he reached Reivers' face, cutting open his other eye, bringing the blood from his nose, stinging him into added furies. Toppy was knocked down several times in the rushes that invariably followed such blows, but each time he recovered himself before Reivers could rush upon him. Suddenly his fighting-instinct telegraphed him that Reivers was about to try something new. He drew back a little, Reivers following closely. Suddenly it came. Without warning Reivers kicked. The blow took Toppy in the groin and he stumbled backward from its

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force. A cry of rage went up from the watching men. But Toppy sprung erect in an instant.

"All right!" he called. "It didn't hurt me. Shut up, you fools."

Thanks to his training, his hard muscles had turned the kick and saved him from being disabled.

"What's the matter, Reivers?" he taunted as he circled carefully. "Losing confidence in your fists? Got to use your feet, eh? Lost your kick, too, haven't you? Well, well! Then you certainly are in for a fine trimming!"

Again Reivers kicked, this time aiming low at the shin-bone; but Toppy avoided it easily and danced back with a laugh.

"Can't even land it any more!" Treplin chuckled. "Show us some more tricks, Reivers!"

REIVERS had thrown off all restraint now. He fought with lowered head, and Toppy once more, as he saw the eyes watching him through the thick brows, thought of a bear. The savagery at the root of Reivers' character was coming to the top. It was mastering, choking down his intelligence. He struck and kicked and gnashed his teeth; and curses rolled in a steady stream from his lips. One kick landed on Toppy's thigh with a thud.

"Here, bahss!" screamed a voice to Toppy, and from somewhere in the crowd an ax was pitched at his feet.

Laughingly Toppy kicked the weapon to one side and, though in deep pain from the last kick, continued fighting as if nothing had happened.

The savage now dominating Reivers had seen and been caught by the sight of the flashing steel. A gleam of animal cunning showed in the depths of his ferocious eyes. To cripple, to kill, to destroy with one terrible stroke—that was his single passion. The ax opened the way.

Craftily he began rushing systematically. Little by little he drove Toppy back. Closer and closer he came to the spot where the ax lay on the ground. Once more Toppy's instinct warned him that Reivers was after a terrible *coup*, and once more his whole mind and body responded with extra vigilance.

As he circled, presently he felt the ax under his feet and understood. He saw that Reivers was systematically working toward the weapon, though apparently unconscious of its existence.

It was in Toppy's mind to dance away, to call out to the men to remove the ax; but before he could do so something had whispered to him to hold his tongue. He continued to retreat slowly, fighting back at every inch.

Now he had stepped beyond the ax.

Now it lay between him and Reivers.

Now it lay beneath Reivers' feet, and now, as Reivers stooped to pick it up, Toppy, like a tiger, flung himself forward. It was what he had foreseen, what had made him hold his tongue.

The savage in Reivers had made him reach for the weapon; the calmly reasoning brain in Toppy's head had foreseen that in that lay his advantage. It was for only an instant, a few eye-winks, that Reivers paused and bent over for the ax; but as Toppy had flung himself forward at the psychological moment it was enough. Reivers was bent over with his hand on the ax, and for a flash he had left the spot behind his left ear exposed.

Toppy's fist, swung from far behind him, struck the spot with the sound of a pistol crack. Reivers, stooped as he was, rolled over and over and lay still. Toppy first picked up the ax and threw it far out of reach. Then he turned to Reivers, who was rising slowly, a string of foul curses on his lips.

Toppy set himself as the Snow-Burner came forward. His left lifted Reivers from his feet. Even while he was in the air, Toppy's right followed on the jaw. The Snow-Burner wavered. Then Toppy, drawing a long breath, called into play all the strength he had been saving. He struck and struck again so rapidly that the eye could not follow, and each blow found its mark; and each was of deadly power.

He drove Reivers backward. He drove him as he willed. He beat him till he saw Reivers' eyes grow glassy. Then he stepped back. The almost superhuman strength of Reivers had kept him on his feet until now in spite of the pitiless storm of blows. Now he swayed back and forth once. His breath came in gasps. His arms fell inert, his eyes closed slowly; and as a great tree falls—slowly at first, then with a sudden crash—the Snow-Burner toppled and fell face downward on the ground.

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CHAPTER XX

TOPPY'S WAY

TOPPY stood and looked down at his vanquished foe. The convulsive rise and fall of his breast as he panted for breath told how desperately and savagely he had fought. Now as he stood victorious and looked down upon the man he had conquered, the chivalry innate in him began to stir with respect and even pity for the man whom he had beaten. He looked at Reivers' bloody face as, the head turned on one side, it lay nuzzled helplessly against the soft ground. A wave of revulsion, the aftermath of his fury, passed over him, and he drew his hand slowly across his eyes as if to shut out the sight of the havoc that his fists had wrought.

And now happened the inevitable. Toppy had not foreseen it, never had dreamed it possible. But now the men who had watched cried aloud their hatred of the big man who lay before them. The king-man, their master, was down! Upright, they would have quailed before his mere look. But now he was down! The man who had mastered them, broken them, tortured them, lay helpless there before them. The courage and hate of slaves suddenly in power over their master flamed through them. This was their chance; they had him now.

"We got him! Kill him! Come on! Finish him!" they roared, and threw themselves like a pack of wolves upon the prostrate man. Even as they rushed Reivers raised his head in returning consciousness; then he went down under a shower of heavily booted feet.

With a bellow of command Toppy flung himself forward. He knew quite well that this was what Reivers deserved; he had even at times hoped that the men some time would have the opportunity for such revenge. But now he discovered that he couldn't stand by and see it done. It wasn't in him. Reivers was down, fairly beaten in a hard fight. He was helpless. Toppy's rage suddenly swerved from Reivers to the men who were trying to kick the life out of him.

"Back! Get back there, I say!" he ordered.

He reached in and threw men right and left. He knocked others down. One he picked up and used as a battering-ram, and so he fought his way in and cleared the rabble away from Reivers. Reivers with more than human tenaciousness had retained a glimmer of consciousness. He saw Toppy standing astride of him fighting for his life. And in that beaten, desperate moment Reivers laughed once more.

"You're a —— fool, Treplin," said he. "You'd better let them finish the job."

Toppy dragged him to his feet. A gleam of mastery flashed over the Snow-Burner as he felt himself standing upright. He swung to face the men.

"Out of the way there, you scum!" he ordered, in his old manner. The men laughed in reply. The spell had been broken. The men had seen the Snow-Burner knocked down and beaten. They had seen that Toppy was his master. They had kicked him; they had had him under them. No longer did he stand apart and above them. They cursed him and swarmed in, striking, kicking, hauling, and dragged him to the ground.

"Give him to us, bahss!" they cried. "Let us kill him, bahss!"

Some of them hung back. They did not wish to run contrary to the wishes of Toppy, their "bahss" and champion. Toppy once more got Reivers on his feet and dragged him toward the gate. A knife or two gleamed in the crowd.

"Run for the gate!" cried Toppy. Reivers tottered a few steps and fell. Over him Toppy stormed, fought, commanded, but the mob pressed constantly closer. Then, suddenly, they stopped striking. They began to break. Toppy, looking around for the reason, saw Campbell and a guard running toward them—Campbell with his big revolver, the guard with his gun at a ready. With a last tremendous effort he picked Reivers up in his arms and ran to meet them. He heard the guard fire once, heard Campbell ordering the men to stand back; then he staggered out of the stockade and dropped his heavy burden on the ground. Behind him Campbell and the guard slammed shut the gate, and within the cries and curses of the men rose in one awful wail, the cry of a blood-mob cheated of its prey.

Reivers rose slowly, first to his hands and knees, then to his feet. He looked at Toppy, and the only expression upon his face was a sneer.

"You —— fool!" he laughed. "You poor weak sister! You'll be sorry before morning that you didn't let the men finish that job!"

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He turned, and without another word went staggering away to the building where he and the guards lived.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SNOW-BURNER'S END

BACK in the shop Campbell went to work with a will to doctor up Toppy's battered face.

"I dunno, lad, I dunno," he muttered as he patched up the ragged cuts. "It was the poetry of justice that the men should have had him, but I dunno that I could ha' left him lie there myself."

"Of course you couldn't," said Toppy. "A man can't do that sort of thing. But, say, Campbell, what do you suppose he meant about being sorry before morning because I saved him?"

Although he had won in the contest which he had so longed for, although he had proved and knew that he was a better man than Reivers, Toppy for some reason experienced none of the elation which he had expected. The thing wasn't settled. Reivers was still fighting. He was still boss of Hell Camp. He was fighting with craft now. What had that final threat meant?

"It has to do with the lass; I'll wager on that," said Campbell. "He will aye be taking his revenge on her. I know the man; he has that way."

"The dog!"

"Aye.—Hold still wi' that ear now.—Aye; it's the way of the man, as I know him. But I'm thinking some one else will play dog, too. Watchdog, I mean. And I'm thinking the same will be mysel'."

"You don't think he'll try——"

"The Snow-Burner will try anything if his mind's set. Even force.—Hold still wi' your chin.—You licked him fair, lad. 'Twas a great fight. You're best man. But I'm glad I have my shooting-utensil handy, for if I'm any judge Hell Camp will aye deserve its name tonight."

"What do you think will happen?"

"'Tis hard to say. But 'tis sure Reivers means to do something desperate, and as I know the man 'tis something that concerns the lass. Then there are the men. They have tasted blood. They have seen the Snow-Burner beaten. His grip has been torn off them. They're no longer afraid. When the working gangs come in this noon and hear the story there'll be nothing can hold them from doing what they please. You know what that will be. They're wild to break loose. Gi'n they lay hands on Reivers they'll tear him and the camp to pieces. Aye, there'll be things stirring here before evening, or I'm a dolt."

True to Campbell's prediction, the stockade shook with cheers, roars and curses that noon when the working men came in and heard the tale of the Snow-Burner's downfall. The discipline of the camp vanished with those shouts. The men were no longer cowed. They were free and unafraid. After they had eaten, the straw-bosses and guards prepared to lead them back to their work.

The men laughed. The bosses joined them. The guards threatened. The men jeered. Reivers, the only force that had kept them cowed, was lying beaten and helpless in his bunk, and not even the shotguns of the guards could cow the fierce spirit that had broken loose in the men when they heard this news.

"Shoot, —— you, shoot!" they jeered at the guards. The guards faltered. The whole camp was in revolt and they knew that as sure as one shot was fired the men would rush at no matter how great the cost to themselves. There were a hundred and fifty maddened, desperate men in the camp now, instead of a hundred and fifty cattle; and the guards, minus Reivers' leadership, retreated to their quarters and locked the door.

The men did not go back to work. Not an ax, peavey or cant-hook was touched; not a team was hitched up. The men swaggered and shouted for Reivers to come out and boss them. They begged him to come out. They wanted to talk with him. They had a lot to tell him. They wouldn't hurt him—no, they would only give him a little of his own medicine!

However, they gave the guards' house a wide berth, on account of the deadly shotguns. The short afternoon passed quickly and the darkness came on.

Toppy and Campbell were sitting down to supper when they noticed that it was unusually light in the direction of the stockade. Presently there was a roaring and crackling; then a chorus of cries, demonlike in their ferocity. Toppy sprang to the window and staggered back at the sight that met his eyes.

"Great Scott, Campbell! Look, look!" he cried. "They've fired the camp!"

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Together they rushed to the door. From the farther end of the stockade a billow of red, pitchy flame was sweeping up into the night, and the roar and crackle of the dried pine logs burning was drowned in the cries of the men as they cheered the results of their handiwork.

Toppy and Campbell ran toward the stockade gate. The gate had been chopped to pieces, but the guards, from the shelter of their building, were shooting at the opening and preventing the men from rushing out. The flames at the far end of the stockade rose higher and fiercer as they began to get their hold on the pitchy wood. The smoke, billowing low, came driving back into the faces of Campbell and Toppy.

"They've done it up brown now!" swore Campbell. "The wind's this way. The whole camp will go unless yon fire's checked."

Over the front of the stockade something flew through the darkness, its parabola marked by a string of sparks that spluttered behind it. It fell near one side of the guards' quarters. A second later it exploded with a noise and shock that shook the whole camp.

"Dynamite," said Scotty. "The men have been stealing it and saving it for this occasion. Gi'n one of those sticks lands on that building there'll be dead men inside."

But the men inside evidently had no mind to wait for such a catastrophe. They came rushing out in the darkness, slipping quickly out of sight, yet firing at the gate as they went. One of them rushed past Toppy in the direction of the office. Toppy scarcely noticed him. On second thought something about the man's great size, his broad shoulders, the hang of his arms, attracted him. He turned to look; the man had vanished in the dark. A vague uneasiness took possession of Toppy. For a moment he stood puzzled.

"My ——!" he cried suddenly. "That was Reivers, and he was going to her!"

He started in pursuit. Reivers was pounding on the door of the office when Toppy reached him. The door was locked.

"Open up; open up at once!" he ordered. Beyond the door Toppy heard the voice of the girl.

"Oh, please, please, Mr. Reivers! I'm afraid!"

Reivers' tone changed.

"Nothing to be afraid of, Miss Pearson," he said blandly. "There's a fire in camp. I want to get in to save the books and papers."

"Is that why you sent Tilly away this morning?" said Toppy quietly, coming up behind him.

Reivers turned with a start.

"Hello, Treplin!" he said, recovering himself instantly. "No hard feelings, I hope."

His manner was so at ease that Toppy was thrown off his guard.

"I won't make the mistake of fighting with you any more, Treplin," continued Reivers. "Look at the way you've spoiled my nose. You ought to fix that up for me. Look at it."

He came closer and pointed with two fingers to his broken nose. Toppy, unsuspecting, leaned forward. Before he could move head or arms Reivers' two hands had shot out and fastened like two iron claws upon his unprotected throat.

"Now, —— you!" hissed Reivers. "Tear me loose or kiss your life good-by."

And Toppy tried to tear him loose—tried with a desperation born of the sudden knowledge that his life depended upon it; and failed. The Snow-Burner had got his death-hold. His arms were like bars of steel; his fingers yielded no more to Toppy's tugging than claws of molded iron.

"Struggle, —— you! Fight, —— you!" hissed Reivers. "That's right; die hard; for, by ——, you're done now!"

THE eyes seemed starting from Toppy's head. His brains seemed to be bursting. He felt a strange emptiness in his chest. Things went red, then they began to go black. He made one final futile attempt. He felt his legs sinking, felt his whole body sagging, felt that the end had come; then heard as if far away the office-door fly open, heard the girl crying—

"Stop, Mr. Reivers, or I'll shoot!"

Then the roar of a shot. He felt the hands loosen on his throat, swayed and fell sidewise as the whole world turned black.

He opened his eyes soon and saw by the light of the rising flames that Campbell was running toward him. In the doorway of the office stood the girl, her left hand over her eyes, Campbell's big black revolver in her right. Down the road, with strange, drunken steps, Reivers was running toward the river. Behind him ran half a dozen men

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armed with axes screaming his name in rage, but Reivers, despite his queer gait, was distancing his pursuers. It was some time before Toppy grasped the significance of these sights. Then he remembered.

"You—you saved me," he said clumsily, rising to his feet. The girl dropped the revolver and burst into a fit of sobbing.

" 'Twas aye handy I thought of giving her the gun and telling her to keep the door locked," said Campbell. "Do you go in, lass. All's well. Go in. She plugged him through the shoulder just in time," he added.

The smoke from the fire swept down into their faces in a choking cloud. Toppy looked toward the stockade. By this time the whole end of the great building was in flames. Soon the fire would be beyond any possible control. At that moment the men who had pursued Reivers came hurrying back.

"He beat us to the river," called out one. "Just beat us. He tried to get across, but the ice was rotten and he didn't make it."

A shock ran through Toppy at the news. Reivers was gone! There was no boss left in Hell Camp.

"Scotty! We've got to put out that fire!" he shouted suddenly. "Come on; we can't let them burn up the whole camp."

Campbell, falling under the sway of his impetuosity, followed as Toppy rushed into the crowd of men gathered about the gate.

"Men! Hold up; shut up; listen to me a minute!" bellowed Toppy's great voice. "Reivers has gone. The gunmen are gone. Hell Camp is gone. There's no sense in our burning the camp now. Come on; help me save it and I'll guarantee that all of you get every cent of the money that's coming to you.

"But if you stand here and let it burn I'll promise you there won't one of you draw a cent. More than that, you'll be prosecuted for setting this fire. What's it going to be—let it burn and lose your wages, or dig in and put out this fire? Hurry and make up your minds; it's a question of seconds."

He was the natural leader there, and they listened to him. He had proved that he would play fair with them, even when he was a boss, and after a pause they responded to his will.

"Ya, bahss," cried one of his old quarry gang. "We work for you."

"Ya, ya, ya! We work for you!" came cries from the crowd.

Bill Sheedy came thrusting his red head through the throng.

"Where's Dynamite Dick?" he roared. "Oh-ee, Dick! Get busy! We're going to blow her up and stop the fire."

A squat, scarred man stepped out and looked up at Toppy questioningly.

"Get busy!" commanded Toppy, quickly comprehending Sheedy's idea. "Blow away that end that's afire and we'll save the rest."

The man called Dick went on the run to the guards' building and returned carrying a small wooden box, at the sight of which the men fled. In company with Toppy he placed his explosive in the bunkhouse as close to the flames as he dared approach, and lighted his fuse.

"Beat it!" he cried warningly, and led the way back to the gate.

A moment later the burning end of the stockade seemed to fly high in the air as the dynamite exploded.

"Now get at it," commanded Toppy, leading the way. "Pull the burning timbers away. Let 'em burn. Get 'em away from the building."

The men responded by swarming over the shattered portion of the stockade, as eager to save as a while before they had been to destroy.

Twice more the dynamiter cunningly placed his explosive and blew the fire to pieces. Twice more the men rushed in and dragged away the burning timbers. Within an hour half of the stockade had been blown away, but the fire was out. The red glare in the sky died down, the smoke-clouds drifted away, and the camp once more was quiet. By the light of a few glowing timbers Toppy gathered the men about him.

"Men, I am going to be boss here now," he said. "But there will be no Hell Camp. No man will stay here unless he wants to. Those of you who want to go will be paid off and sent out. Those of you who want to stay will get a square deal. The Snow-Burner is gone, and I'm boss in his place."

It was a challenge, deliberate, even defiant, in its assurance. Toppy waited with outshot jaw to hear what the verdict of the men would be. There was a moment of silence.

Then a "white man," towering over the crowd, spoke quietly—

"All right, boss; that goes."

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And old Campbell growled in admiration—

"By the eternal! The lad's a grown man!"

CHAPTER XXII

WHAT TOPPY WON

TWO weeks later Toppy came driving back to the camp from Rail Head, where he had gone on business. He had been in Rail Head for three days. During those days he had kept the single telegraph-wire running out to the great world beyond busy with his messages and replies. Through his bankers he had been placed in touch by wire with brokers who were in touch with the Cameron Dam Company. Through these brokers he had dealt to the extent of many thousands of dollars. Wherefore now Toppy, as he whirled along over the snow toward camp, felt a certain degree of elation, for in his inner pockets reposed papers that made him owner of fifty-one per cent. of the stock of the Cameron Dam Company.

As he drove up to the office he thought of how he had first come to the place—aimless, useless, a waster. It was different now. He had proved himself a leader among men, and had done it with no money or influence to help him. The old habits had gone. A definite purpose in life had caught him and held him. Toppy had found himself. His mind went back to the beginning of the change. How had it begun? What was the reason?

The picture of a girl alighting from a train flashed through his mind. She was small, and she walked erect and gave one the impression that she was used to taking care of herself. And he had followed her. Why? What had prompted him? It was not characteristic of him. It was not natural to him. But he had followed her; and it had led him to his true place among men who did things.

He was still musing on this problem as he stepped out of the sleigh and entered the office. At his step Miss Pearson looked up from the ledger on which she was working.

"Oh, you did come back after all!" she cried, and her eyes were alive with relief and joy.

Toppy was puzzled. He stared at her. The red in the girl's cheeks deepened and spread. Her eyes blinked uncertainly; suddenly she hid herself behind the ledger in confusion.

Toppy came around slowly to her side.

"Why—why did you say that?" he asked in fear and trembling.

The girl would not look up. She even turned her face away.

"Did you think I might not come back?"

She nodded. Toppy heard a faint sound that sounded like half sob, half laughter.

"Why did you think that?"

"Oh, I don't know." Still she did not look up; again the queer little sound. "I—I thought you might have got tired of this camp."

Toppy took a long breath and nerved himself to desperation.

"Are—are you glad I did come back?" he stammered.

Then she looked up at him, and her eyes spoke all that was needed.

"Helen—little girl!" cried Toppy, springing forward.

"Bob—Bob!" said the girl, and in his big arms she leaned her little head against his vest-pocket and wept happily.

"I was afraid," she sobbed. "I knew you—you didn't belong in the woods. I—I was afraid you might have gone back—to—to some other woman."

Clumsily, tenderly his big hands found her head and turned her face up to his.

"You're not afraid of anything of that sort now, are you?" he said.

"No," she laughed through her tears. "No, I'm not afraid of anything now."

"As for belonging here," said Toppy, stroking her hair, "this is the first place I've ever amounted to anything in; so I believe I belong here more than any place else. I'm going to stay. But that isn't the real reason why I came back;" he concluded softly.

"What is it then?" she said, looking steadily up at him.

Then they both laughed.

"Little hypocrite!" he said tenderly. "You know it's—you."

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FOUL OF THE CZAR

A Tale of Dick Anthony of Arran

By Talbot Mundy

A WESTER was blowing savage seas against the coast of Palestine, and the steamers trading up and down beam-on to it made heavy weather. Half of the time the *Themistokles* whirled her one propeller in the air; most of the other time it *chug-chug-chugged* in surface spume. Progress was slow, and comfort a minus quantity; safety had not been charged for.

So there were only three passengers who did not suffer on the ship's account. One of them—the Princess Karageorgovich—was too interested; Andry MacDougal was too hard-bitten; and the third—Dick Anthony—would scarcely have suffered just at that time on a red-hot grid. He would have chuckled, probably, if he had guessed that the course was pricked out in a bee-line for the shoals of death; and as it was, he behaved as a gentleman might be expected to in hell.

As a fugitive from justice—a Scottish gentleman of decent birth and nice distinctions—life held no very luring bait for him, and death, with a spice of accident, looked, smelled, and tasted good. For choice he would have picked a finish of the "Charge of Balaklava" type, but since that solace was denied him, the "Loss of the *Birkenhead*" held sympathetic memories and imitable joys. Drowning all-standing while the women got away would have been the decent end of a proud man, and the prospect of it did not seem so hopelessly improbable as the bow lurched off and on again in sticky, stinging spray, and the priming cylinders wheezed and grew weaker.

Thought of the possibility put new comfort into him. He began to look up and look about him. And since the after, first-class, part of the ship was very small, he could not help but see the woman—who, of course, would get away to safety while he drowned chin-high on a sinking deck!

So far as observation went just then, there was only one woman; her maid was seasick, and invisible. The Princess Olga Karageorgovich was not of the type that surrenders to the weather; nor did her complexion need shelter. No older than Dick Anthony in years, she was serenely, sweetly, radiantly beautiful, and as serenely conscious of it; the shawl, the pillow, and the other odds and ends were trimmings, not necessities. The angle of her daintily shod foot was not haphazard. And, since the wind *would* tousle her brown hair, she saw to it without fuss that her curves and motions harmonized.

Dick's eye—sadder just now than it had ever been—fired and grew savage as he watched her, imagining himself unwatched. He could not see the little mirror hidden in the deep folds of the shawl. His chin, which had been sulking much too low, rose higher

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and looked braver. The sorrow that was his, squeezed out by the knowledge that his eye was on his enemy, began to be succeeded by another feeling more appropriate to an Anthony of Arran.

He had not the least notion how royal he looked—how much like what a man should look in armor.

IT WAS Andry, and for the second time in history, who drew a cord unwittingly and loosed the dogs of war. Bowing to the fact that Scottish lungs—two hundred nine-and-forty pounds, nine ounces, stripped to the buff—six feet five of bone and brawn—will not fit comfortably into a two-berth cabin six by four, and Dago-clean, Andry dug his bagpipes from a box beneath the bunk and struggled forward. They were his one possession that yet linked him personally with a world he had given up for Dick's sake, and as he went he sheltered them carefully beneath his jacket.

He sought inspiration, that he might inspire his master, and he sat a while in thought. Before long, as thoughts will come to a man quite different from what he seeks, the recollection came of how a Jew in Glasgow had gotten the better of him once in a bargain over a suit of reach-me-downs. And here, on the starboard bow, was Palestine!

His red ire kindled at the notion; and from where the duller gray of wind-snapped boiler-suits flouted a dark, wet sky—a-squat on a catted anchor, and oblivious of everything but what he was and did—Andry made Highland music. He treated the Jews ashore to a musical summary of what he thought of them, and he prayed that they might have ears and sense enough to retranslate the noise, and spunk enough to be resentful. Bagpipes were invented, and are made and played, by men with leather lungs and most deliberate minds; so, if the Jews could but have heard him, they might have guessed at the dishonor that was theirs.

Somebody else did hear. A few stray notes blew back along the deck to where the Princess Olga nestled in a steamer-chair. The thunder of the sea, the scream of gulls, the sobbing-sucking-wheezing-pounding of the engine-room, the shriek of wind through the standing rigging, were all in harmony; but the chanter's defiant notes, piercing occasionally through the medley, made inharmony and set her teeth on edge. She writhed each time the bagpipe music reached her.

And it is possible to be an outlaw and bear malice, yet remain a gentleman. It is more than possible to hail from Arran, and have powers of observation. One can be Scots, and have pity on the weaker sex. With his tawny hair blown into jungle by the wet, salt wind, Dick Anthony leaned forward and asked a question. Wind snatched the words, but not its meaning.

"I can't hear," she smiled. And as plain as writing on a wall she meant "Come closer."

So Dick drew nearer, wondering why Fate made him share a fifty-foot-long deck with his female enemy. Were the Powers sleeping? It wasn't decent, or so it seemed to him.

"Do the pipes get on your nerves?" he asked.

"On s'y habitue."

The shrug was inimitable, and her smile was of the kind that alters dynasties. Napoleon dallied at Warsaw once for something of the kind; and nothing more betrays Dick's difference from certain other men of destiny than his behavior then. He owed her every single item in his sickening total of misfortune, and her interference with him had been gratuitous and impudent; for her own ends she had turned his honor into shame. But he did not choose that she must grow used to bagpipe music, or go without her meed of mere civility.

He was a human man, and he looked her for an ungrudged minute in the eye, giving her all the admiration she could claim—and that was a prodigious quantity; from such a man as Dick it was inestimable; it made her delirious. Then he turned on his heel and left her. She read the strong, free manliness in his movement as a signaler reads semaphores; he intended to adjust her minor comforts, since she would suffer otherwise, and then forget her, her doings, and even his contempt for her! It was fine; but it was dangerous. Her lip-line hardened as he went.

Even as he struggled forward, leaning into the wind with dirty scupper-slush aslide between his feet and his arms outspread to grasp things, he looked different from other men—more dignified and less self-conscious. She left her seat and clung

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to a rail to watch him, knowing well that he would have laughed at her had he known it.

"Give them here, Andry!" he ordered; and the giant gave up his pipes with an expression of obedient resentment. From the safe seclusion of the bridge the Captain sighed his gratitude that Dick, and not he, had been called on to interfere.

"There's a lady aft who doesn't like pipe music. I'll put these in the bag with mine."

"A leddy?"

"The Princess."

"Man—Mr. Dicky, sir—I hae ma doots she's no' a Princess at a'—just a wumman, an' verra dangerous! Have a care, Mr. Dicky! A mon ye may dr-rive a dir-rk into, or heave into the sea, or cr-rush; but if ye cr-rush a wumman—leasti-ways her kind—'tis to y'r ain undoin'! I've had expeerience, an' ye may learn from mine. There was a lassie once in Glasgie—a wee bit lassie, not so big as yon——"

But Dick was in no mood for reminiscences. He struggled aft again and left Andry gazing out to sea like some great freckled figurehead, with red hairs outstanding on its arms like the spines on a gooseberry. Andry had forgotten Jews now; he was measuring Scots judgment with a rule and line on his master and the Princess and the past. By evening he had a sermon pickled by, with references to Robbie Burns and Holy Writ all sandwiched in the proper places. He was ready and willing to improve the first occasion.

Dick packed away the bagpipes and avoided the Princess all afternoon; it was easy enough, for though the deck was small the sea was too rough for promenading; he sat on one side and she on the other of the little after-deckhouse. He avoided her again at dinner-time by going without food, depending on Andry, who did not believe in missing meals, to watch points for him without further definite instructions. Andry sat in the farthest corner of the small saloon, keeping both eyes on her and eating awfully the while, and he was still eating when she went up on deck again: it did not occur to him to hurry first up the narrow companion and warn Dick of her coming.

FATE helped out the next move certainly, for only Fate could have made any one screw a hideous full-length mirror at the head of the companion. The Princess ran into Dick at a moment when there was no room to step aside. And she knew better this time than to try to win by smiling.

"Thank you very much for stopping the music," she said simply; and she waited where she was, because just then the deck was too unsteady.

"Not at all," said Dick uncomfortably.

The ship gave a terrific lurch. A lesser artist would have let herself be lurched into him. She clung to a hand-rail with both hands, and he was forced in common manliness to offer her an arm. Nor could he escape the ordinary civility of helping her to her chair, and he tucked the rugs around her, wondering that her eyes should blaze so in the dark, and all unconscious of the blazing of his own.

"Thank you, Mr. Anthony," she said quietly. And as he started to leave her she repeated, "Mr. Anthony!"

He had to stoop to listen, for the engines were arguing with a rising sea.

"Are we enemies?" she asked. She spoke calmly, without coquetry, as if she sought information.

"Yes," he said simply, and she laughed straight up at him deliciously, delighted.

Andry chose that moment to pass by, his huge legs braced against the ship's movement, and a hand to his mouth; it was not possible to hear him cough, but the attitude was eloquent. Dick made up his mind then that Andry was a man-servant and not a dry-nurse; he decided that instant not to walk away, and the Princess Olga Karageorgovich read both decision and its reason.

"Then, my enemy, this is my flag of truce!"

She produced a white handkerchief—priceless, lace-edged, ridiculously tiny. Dick pulled out his immense one, laughing too; and his laugh, as usual, calmed his own temper as well as other people's: it was ugly, unmusical, full of unfathomable strength and strong good-nature.

"Now that both flags are flying, will you please sit here beside me and discuss matters? Or, would your man perhaps not like it?"

Dick went in search of a camp-stool. He set it in a corner close to her, where he could watch her face.

"Won't you sit more forward, where I can see you, too?"

"No," he said quietly; and she laughed

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again, like a little girl who has found something altogether new to play with.

Without knowing it, she was in luck's way as regarded opening negotiations. She would have laughed at his ideals, for her own were personal, supposing that she had any. Most of all she would have laughed at his respect for the Anthony motto, "Agree with thine adversary quickly." Yet, if she had known it, it was his belief in the family motto as something to live up to that had made the conversation possible.

Translated by Dick, it was identical with Nelson's flag-spelled battle-signal, "Engage the enemy more closely!" From his peculiar standpoint, the one way to agree was forward, and the one spot face to face. He conceded only that it was always good to listen patiently, and make quite sure his case was just; but even at that, one's enemy was the one to listen to, and that again was a close-quarter business. So he sat and listened, in strong, non-committal silence.

"Do you admit my right to be compassionate?" she asked him. Had he admitted it or denied it she would have scored at the first assault, but he said nothing. She had to begin again.

"I am sorry for you, Mr. Anthony. You and your man between you killed nearly a dozen men in Alexandria. You are an outlaw. How will you escape?"

But Dick was there to listen, and he could do that better than most men. He did not speak.

"I suppose you are afraid to tell me?"

Her eyes laughed expectantly as she stared into the blackness overside and waited for an answer. But Dick was drawing quiet amusement as he read her face, and it was she who had to resume the burden of assault. He answered nothing.

She looked at him once sidewise, and then summoned all her skill and personality, all her acumen, to a new attempt. Her every line and feature showed to best advantage silhouetted in the night, and every motion as she turned to meet his eyes was calculated to bewitch.

He could see that her eyes were violet, and languorous (when she chose to have them so). And she saw that her first note of his as lion's eyes was altogether wrong: there was nothing of the cat-like in them; they had too much courage, too little savagery, and too much intelligence. They looked so straight into hers that she was at a loss for words, until she remembered that unless she spoke first he would not speak at all.

"It was my fault," she said then. "I should have asked you first. But who, in a world full of wild improbabilities, would dream of a man like you, a confessed malcontent, poor, proud, and at a loose end, refusing the offer of a kingdom! Only a Don Quixote could behave so unexpectedly —confess it! Admit you were unreasonable, Mr. Anthony!"

He admitted nothing. "I was free of the world when I first saw you," he answered. "And I never invited you to interfere."

SHE switched her angle of attack with a suddenness that would have bewildered many men, and was intended to bewilder Dick. She aimed to reach personal ground, where she would have most strength and skill, and he least.

"So. You blame me for your own outlawry. But, how much less did you do to me, Mr. Anthony? I too am an outlaw, and of whose making?"

"Your own," said Dick.

"Did you give me time or chance to change my plans? Did you consider me? I—I chose you to be a king; that surely was a compliment. All Egypt waited for nothing but the order to rise and——"

"And overthrow by treachery the Government of a King, in one of whose regiments I am an officer," he intercepted.

He stated facts. She was there to juggle with them, not play into his hand.

"You blame me," she insisted, "but you gave me neither time nor chance to make different arrangements. Instead of refusing soberly and treating my disclosures to you as confidences——"

"They were uninvited."

"—You fought. You broke up everything. You fled, and you left me no course but flight!"

"I knew nothing about your plans, and I cared less," said Dick. "I care nothing now. If you want to know what I think of you, I'll remind you that I heard you order that riffraff gang of conspirators to murder me."

"Do you suppose I would have let them kill you?"

"Yes."

"Do you really suppose I would have let them?"

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The look she wasted on him had ruined more than one pawn in the international game, but Dick was a king-piece; she did not have in her the metal that could strike an answering spark from him.

"I'm sure," he answered quietly.

So again she changed her angle of attack. It was part of her *credo* that men whose price was high could nevertheless be bought, or blackmailed, or coaxed, or trapped, or shamed. She wanted Dick. He was conscious of an almost physical change of guard to meet her altered tactics.

"Then, believe it, Mr. Anthony! Perhaps you are right. Perhaps, in the heat of that minute and that misery, I would have had you killed. Disappointment like that breeds passion. But that was then, Mr. Anthony, and this is here and now. May I not repent? Listen! I am a Russian. My paymaster is Russia, I am answerable to Russia only, and I was working then for Russia. Russia's plan is to advance—advance—advance!"

"Behind the skirts of—er—ladies?"

She checked, and bit her lip, then took her talents by the head and tried again.

"Imagine yourself in my position, Mr. Anthony. Try. I offered you a kingdom, you remember—a kingdom and Russia's backing."

Dick made no answer, but she was aware that every sense he had was on the exquisite *qui vive*. It was like attacking a trained swordsman in the dark, with only a dagger for a weapon.

"For some quixotic reason that I don't profess to understand—perhaps patriotism, so-called, or jingoism; who knows?—you refused the offer at less than a moment's notice, and offered instant fight. You seized me most ungallantly, ripped my veil, betrayed my identity to men from whom it was a secret, upset the plans of three years that had cost millions, balked Russia's plans in Persia, which depend solely now on England's army being too occupied to interfere; and made Egypt and all British territory too hot for me and for yourself—all in one mad minute! And you complain because I called on them to kill you in the heat of that mad minute!"

"I did not hear myself complain," said Dick.

"You forget that you made your escape in *my* carriage, leaving me 'in the soup,' as your idiom is! It was only by the most extraordinary luck that I contrived to reach my hotel in time and catch this steamer with my maid and luggage. Now I, too, am an outlaw! I, too, am a fugitive from what you choose to call justice! Are you imagining yourself in my position, Mr. Anthony? Are you trying to?"

"No."

"In my position — when you reached Russia — as I *shall* reach Russia — you would — no longer — be a fugitive — from justice!"

"No?" said Dick; and she heard him catch his breath. She suspected shrewdly that she had touched a train that would lead to a magazine.

"You are a fugitive." She sat bolt upright, and told off the points with a cautioning forefinger. "You dare not set foot on British territory, and the wireless waves are surely out against you everywhere. You are in danger wherever you disembark. You are lost. You are done for. You are damned, Mr. Anthony!"

He did not answer her. When his antagonist appeared to hold the stronger hand he nearly always waited. She misunderstood his silence.

"I myself heard you describe yourself as a rebel to a high official in the club at Cairo. It meant little then, perhaps, but it will be remembered against you now! By this time a flashlight photo of you, standing with sword aloft in the midst of known criminals, is in the hands of the police. You slew men in a brawl. You ran. You stand convicted by circumstantial evidence—you, an officer in the British army, as I have heard you claim. What do you propose to do? Where will you go?"

"That is my business, and not yours," said Dick.

"No? Not mine? You forget. Consider my position and my business a moment. I am a woman, Mr. Anthony. I trapped a man, or was instrumental in trapping him. I saw him—oh, Mr. Anthony!—I saw him fight his way out of the trap where any other living man I ever met would have quailed, would have been overwhelmed! For the first time in all my life, Mr. Anthony, I saw a really brave man, a truly brave man—a man whose courage I could honor. I lost sight of him, believing I had ruined him. And I travel with him on the same ship by the merest accident!"

Dick listened, but said nothing.

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"Mr. Anthony! In my position, were I you, would you not try to save that man? Remember, when I reach Russia I will no longer be a fugitive. Russia protects me, and whom else I name! Were you in my shoes—had you brought about my ruin—would not *you* help *me?*"

The wind howled, and the little steamer writhed and creaked. From the wheezy engine-room there came the sob of overloaded valves and the racket of strained machinery. Sea, sky, and ship had songs to sing, but Dick said nothing.

"In my shoes, would you not ask forgiveness, and try to make amends?"

Not a word said Dick. The blackness behind him throbbed, as if Night herself were spell-bound, but he sat his campstool still, unmoved.

"I am offering you, Mr. Anthony, the protection of the Russian Government—the hospitality of Russia. I have power to offer it."

"And I decline with thanks."

A sigh seemed to pour out from the deep, dead black behind him; but that might have been the overloaded engines.

"Listen, imbecile! It means exactly this: From the moment you set foot in Russia you are free! I will name you to the lieutenant-governor of a province, and he will accord you his protection. There are no conditions, no terms. Will you not accept?"

"No, thanks," said Dick; and he arose to offer her his arm.

She knew enough to know when she had failed; and she was far too wise to make failure irretrievable with further argument. She took his arm, and let him lead her to the head of the companion.

"My offer stands," she smiled over her shoulder as she left him.

"So does my refusal," answered Dick; and he strode out on to the dark deck again, to be met instantly by Andry—a big, black ghost emerging out of blackness, and peering in his face.

"If I catch you listening again, my man," said Dick, "I'll kick you overboard; d'you hear? You sigh like a boiler bursting! Mind your own business; d'you understand?"

"Aye. I mind. But, Mr. Dicky, sir—ye're daft—ye're fey—deementit; man, yon's an opportunity! Her plan's a gude ane, an'—an' the lassie's head o'er heels in love wi' ye—a fule cud see it! Man—Mr. Dicky—ye shud ha' clappit baith ar-r-rms 'roond her an'——"

"Good-night, Andry!"

"But, Mr. Dicky——"

"Andry!"

"Sir?"

"Help yourself, if you want her help or Russia's. For me, I'll see her and Russia damned in hell before I'll ask or accept a favor!"

"Listen to him! Weel! Aweel, Mr. Dicky, I'm y'r man!"

"So I understand. Good-night, Andry."

"Gude-nicht, sir."

II

THE sea died down, but the night was comfortless, for the Levant can be rawer-wet than seas with milder names. Dick went below at midnight, to brace himself in a swaying berth and fight with a hatred of the world that he knew was unworthy of him. He was feeling mean and hopeless for the first time in his life. But it takes time to grow used to outlawry, when a man is bred and self-trained Dicky's way.

He knew he would recover, for only cowards at heart and mean men, who are down and under by the logic of their own misdeeds, doubt eventual outcomes. He, who had drawn an Andry to him through a raging sea by merely being Dick, was not built to be gloomy overlong.

Too indifferent at first to undress, he lay with his clothes on, watching cockroaches hunt on the cabin floor, and listening to Andry advertising sleep, five cabins down the starboard corridor. Humor returned soon, and Dick laughed at the protests of a Levantine; first one by one in seven languages, and then in all seven together blasphemously mixed, he was trying to make the enormous man in the berth above him cease snoring.

But the berth was five inches too short by any reckoning, and Andry's six-feet-five were packed in like a panorama, face upward; he could not have helped snoring, even had he understood the flow of words. Vaguely he dreamed that the man below was saying Asiatic prayers; but he had said his own long-worded, Calvinistic ones aloud before he got in bed, so no heathen incantations could disturb him. His "auld Scots

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mither" had brought him up in the belief that prayer could blast unrighteousness, so he even dreamed pityingly, for he had a charitable heart concealed within that grim exterior.

Night was awful with the Levantine's yells, before the actual crash came and the night split open at the birth of ruin. He and Andry leaped from their bunks the same instant, and Andry landed last, on top. Thinking of Dick, and of how to reach Dick soon enough and be of use, he remained on top while he reached for his boots and jacket. With dour mistrust of foreigners, he had slept in his shirt and breeks, and needed only boots to be a "real mon."

One instant the underpowered, creaking ship had slugged amid beam-on seas. Then the bridge babeled suddenly through megaphones. Somebody yelled *"C-H-R-I-S-T!"* with fear-rasped lungs, and the engine-room bell rang mad, mistaken messages. The engines tried to go astern. The decks were a sudden battleground, a-drum with hurrying feet, and the siren hooted until the vision arose of a monster with terror-widened eyes staring into chaos.

And then the shock came—a thousand-ton-weight blow, with no answering ring at all, but a shudder, and the sickening, yielding feel and sound of steel plates bending inward. Then the lights went out.

The ship bucked, and sat down. The rolling altered to a writhing movement, with a jerk at either end and a slowly growing list to port. Andry left his cabin like a whirlwind, but with his boots on, and with a fistful of the Levantine in either hand.

He hove the protesting merchant up the companion steps, and paid no attention to the other's yells for more guidance, but felt his way back, cabin-door by door, to where Dick thundered on the panels. The strain of the shock and list had jammed the door tight. In a moment Andry's feet were against the nearest bulkhead, and he grunted as his shoulders took the strain. The door creaked once, and then went in, frame and all, as if a typhoon struck it; the door and Dick collapsed in the cabin corner.

"Ar-r-re ye dressed?" demanded Andry. "Ar-r-re y'r boots on?"

"Yes. Get off me! Man, you weigh a ton!"

"Is the bag packed? Aye; I have it an' the claymore, here; I have 'em baith!"

"Get off me, man!"

"Ar-r-re ye hur-r-rt, Mr. Dicky?"

"Come on!" answered Dick; and all that Andry saw then was a black shadow, which he raced after in the blackness, trying to catch up. Dick went for the companion as he had charged around the scrum in the old days, the best three-quarter-back in Britain; he reached the deck as if shot out of the bowels of the night by springs, and he had the situation conned before Andry had overtaken him. And Andry was no sluggard, for his size and weight.

The steam of two stricken ships rip-roared to heaven, as they lurched bow-on, locked in a death-grip, already by the head. There was a glow above the funnels, and a lantern flickered here and there; but darkness hid most of it. Screams told the story—fear-frenzied yells of men, stentorian orders roared at a fallen dam, and the dead, dread weight of flowing, thousand-minded terror, out of all control, blind, tangible. They had struck a pilgrim ship, bound Meccaward.

Already over the stove-in bow Turks, Kurds, Albanians, and every sort and breed of fanatic that makes that pilgrimage swarmed in a savage rush for boats. The Greek Captain and an English mate opened fire with their revolvers, aiming at the whites of human eyes. A Greek bo'sun charged forward gamely with a capstan-bar, and by the light of a revolver-flash Dick saw him fall backward, with a thrown knife in his throat.

Four of the little liner's boats were overside already, crowded full. Frantic men from both ships, packed in already much too tight to be of use, were trying to shove off, but the waves drove them back again against the side and more men dropped into them in fifties. Dick saw one boat go to pieces and another swamp in the thirty seconds while he watched. Then he began to search the decks for something, and Andry followed close, not quite sure what the something was.

SUDDENLY Dick turned and gripped Andry, as his way was when there was time to be emphatic. Andry stooped, for roaring steam, revolver-shots, hoarse shouts, the thundering tide of feet, yells to two Gods in a dozen languages, and the pounding overside blended in pandemonium; a man could scarcely hear himself.

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"The women!" yelled Dick. "They're below yet!"

"Aye. They'll droon."

"Leave the bag. Come on!"

But Andry pulled a wry face, and stayed to hide the bag and sword where he could find them. The next thing he saw was matches being struck at the foot of the companion, sheltered in the hollow of a hand against the air that rushed upward. Two seconds later he cannoned into Dick, taking ten stairs at a time and missing his footing at the bottom.

"Did I hur-r-rt ye?"

"No."

"Man, ye must hurry! Ye'll be trappit in the dark! Can ye no' hear the watter gugglin' up?"

But Dick was gone again, swift-footed down the listing passageway. He had heard screams, in Russian, then in French, muffled by an intervening door.

"Au secours! A moi! A nous! Ouvrez! Venez! Ouvrez! La porte est——"

He and Andry charged into the swaying blackness through a living tide of rats. They trod on dozens of them. Some sprang on them, to be flung off with an oath and crushed. A match that Dick struck was reflected instantly in a river of glittering eyes. In the second while they paused to get foot-purchase rats swarmed over them, and Andry crushed one squealing thing to death between his shoulder and the woodwork. Then wood creaked and splintered, and a door burst inward.

At once some one pressed the button of an electric torch, and its all but exhausted rays shone golden on Dick's hair.

"I knew you would come for me," smiled the Princess.

"We'll have to hurry up," said Dick.

The light of her torch shone past him into Andry's carved, grim face, and the maid recognized him as the thin rays paled and died. There was reassurance in his huge, deep-breathing presence, whatever she might think of his attractiveness; her fear began to go and her below-stairs officiousness to come.

"Ugh!" she exclaimed. *"Le monstre!* Take thiss portmanteau! Thiss one, *imbécile!* Yess, that*t* one! Pick it up!" Then she screamed—long, shrilly, with the ghastly note of a coward facing death. The Princess screamed an echo to her.

Rats had come in by dozens through the burst-in door. Dick struck his last match but one, as the maid collapsed in helpless hysteria; its light showed the Princess fighting royally with the fear that passes understanding, rigid, deathly white, but brave enough to be ashamed of having screamed. Then the ship shuddered its whole length long, and settled forward two feet, as the crushed bows parted company.

"Have ye another match?" asked Andry.

So Dick struck his last one, for the torch had given out.

"Which trunk said she? Yon big ane? Ay, for she's a wumman, an' they're a' alike! Ready, sir! Lead on!"

The match went out. The blackness throbbed with human questioning and deep-breathed decision. Dick had to feel for the Princess, and at the first touch she sank into his arms.

"Ah, Richard—— Oh, *mon roi!*" she murmured. "I am safe—I know that I am safe!"

So Dick gathered her up and ran for it, stumbling over rats, and Andry followed him, like a battery at the flog, with a woman under one arm and a trunk in the other that weighed impudence knew how much. He laid both on the deck beside Dick just as somebody on the bridge lit a bunch of oily waste; a smoky flame danced over howling hell and showed the glint of knives, where maniacs from the other ship fought for the last left lifeboat. He rushed off at once, then, for the sword and bag, and brought them back triumphantly.

Then the mate spied them, in the light of his weird torch.

"There's a small boat aft," he shouted. "Take it."

"Come with us!" bellowed Dick, remembering, as he spoke, a dingey of a thing that hung in davits abaft the after wheel.

"We've another one up here," roared the mate. "Hurry, man! She's about going by the head!"

Standing was difficult already, and the slope of the deck was growing greater. Dick rushed astern, and Andry followed. In a minute, being sailors both of them, they had the little boat swung clear and Andry hove the luggage in. Their one chance was to get away before the mob knew that they had a chance and charged to take it from them; they worked as only brave men dare when a ship is sinking—fast, but with infinite attention to small detail. Within a

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minute the maid lay in the bottom of the dingey. And then the worst happened:

"Mr. Dicky, quick, sir! They've seen us! They're comin' hot-foot!"

In the split, skinned, demi-semi-fraction of the nick of time Dick grabbed a capstan-bar from its rack by the after wheel, and an instant later it struck skull-meat with a ton-weight smack. A knife, meant for Dick, went slivering through the night. Andry hove the Princess off her feet and swung her in beside her maid, and as he dropped her he snatched an oar. There followed then —night-hidden, guess-lunging, hell-ghastly, quicker than the Mersey shambles—a fight that beggared their rush for the moonlight, back in Alexandria.

One instant they were back-to-the-rail, close pressed on a tilted deck grown slippery with blood. The next, with a cheer, and a "Scotland forever" yell from Andry, they had driven the mad swarm downhill, Dick's awful wooden bar beating like the flail of Judgment Day and Andry's oar split by the weight of blows. But back they came again—uphill, railward; for the swarm was being fed. A boat was a boat, and fear was fear that night.

More than a dozen times, ten feet each time, they drove the mob backward, blanched and wilting; but again and again darkness and the sheer dead weight of savagery won. They could not hold their gain, and Dick was running blood, although Andry did not know it. Suddenly, just as they had charged, Dick yelled to Andry to jump in and lower away the boat.

"Na, na! I'll no leave ye!"

"Get in and lower away!" commanded Dick, charging again like a bear at bay, to cover the retreat.

"I'll no leave ye!" And Andry's oar beat like a forester's green branch, when the low fires crackle.

So Dick spared a swing with that dreadful flail of his, and struck for the sake of discipline.

"Get in and lower away!" he ordered, as the big man staggered back.

"Ou-aye!"

ANDRY blubbered, then, while he obeyed. Scots custom, courage, inclination, bade him die beside his master or over his master's body. Saving two female enemies, while Dick died fighting, made no appeal to him. But with arms outspread he paid away both falls, and the boat took water fairly underneath the stern.

"Pull clear!" roared Dick; and Andry heard the awful thrashing of the capstan-bar—too close to the rail, too desperately quick to be reassuring. But he obeyed again. His fisherman's lore made nothing of the dying waves, although the little dingey danced like a cork on them; he was on his element, and he had eyes to spare; he watched the stern he was leaving, miserably, while he pulled away from it.

When he stopped at last to lean on his oars and listen, the Princess bent forward, laying a hand on his enormous one.

"Leave us here, and swim back to him!" she urged.

"Jezebel!" he hissed. "I hae ma orders!"

So, since she was Olga Karageorgovich, she gathered that he could not swim and wished to save his face. Her agile brain was searching, searching for another plan, when a splash came that put new, sudden heart in Andry. The two stout oars bent into semicircles, as his great back-muscles cracked and the dingey spun. The little boat leaped on the wave-tops as the flying fishes scoot from the dolphins. Under the overhanging stern he stopped and plunged his arms in; in an instant Dick's dripping head was hauled clear of the gunwale; in an instant more he lay on the bottom of the boat, bruised and bleeding, but alive. Then Andry took to his oars again like a man possessed, grinning, his lungs heaving, and the distance between them and the downward-sucking hell lengthened by streaks.

He stopped when he saw a distant shadow lift—that was a steamer's stern. He leaned on his oars then, and heard the deadened thunderclap of bursting boilers. After that there were no lights—not even lanterns—and no sounds. He paddled back, to find the mate and Captain if he might, but by morning he had found no trace of any other boat; the ships had sucked down everything.

"Aye!" he said, as dawn broke. "Bathe awa'!" The Princess was bathing Dick's head with a handkerchief dipped overside, and a movement had decided Andry that the end was at least not yet. "Mak' the maist o' y'r opportunity! Tak' the utmost care o' him, for if he dees I'll upset the boat an' droon us a'! But, dinna hope he'll kiss ye when he wakes—na, na! He said he'd see ye, an' Roosia too, in hell afore he'd tak'

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one favor; aye, an' he's a mannie o' his word, is Mr. Dicky! Bathe awa'!"

"*Cannibale!*" hissed the maid. "*Monstre!*" Her seasickness and hysteria, both, had left her as the waves died down. The Princess did not answer; she was following the line of Andry's eyes that peered at something in the lifting, early light.

"I'm wonderin' what they gie a mon to eat on yon steamer?" he said unexcitedly; then his eyes sought Dick again. He had seen Dick's eyes open—look around once—and close.

"Is he takkin' time to think?" he wondered. "Or—na, na, but aye! 'Twill be that! Aye, that'll be the answer! The puir laddie got an awfu' sair crack o' the skull—ou-aye!"

He was glum—silent—ruminant for an hour, while a dirty steamer overtook them. He watched Dick's face until the *Nizhni-Novgorod*—bound for the Dardanelles and Black Sea ports—lost way beside them, and lowered a Jacob's-ladder down her grimy side.

Somebody called out in Russian from the bridge, and the Princess answered; she seemed a Princess again at sight of her native ensign and sound of her native tongue. Disarrayed and tired, she stood up in the little boat and told them who she was, authority and pleasure radiating from her. But Andry, dour as an old hound, gripped an oar tighter. He was suspicious of foreign languages, and of dirty sailors on dirtier ships, who leaned over bulwarks without speaking.

They seemed to own no companion-ladder. After a lot of talk with the Princess they took the cover off a hatch and rigged it in slings.

"Lay Mr. Anthony on that!" the Princess ordered, as they lowered it overside from an outswung derrick. She seemed to think obedience would be infectious.

"Leddies first!" said Andry; and his lips closed tight.

"I will sit on it beside him."

"Wull ye!" He was standing with enormous legs astride to balance things, and one great hairy arm was laid on the swaying sling. "Wad ye think me fule enough to trust him—my Mr. Dicky—on a plank wi' ye, or on a deck wi' ye—an' me doon here wi' anither wumman on ma han's? Up awa' wi' baith o' ye!"

He made an all-comprising, all-contemptuous gesture with his arm, and the Princess recognized inflexibility. The anger in her eye glowed fair, full warning of reprisals, but Andry grinned at her, and grinned again as he lifted the shuddering maid. The vixen kicked him for his pains; so he kissed her, laughing aloud at her screams of indignation. What cared he? The worst, he argued, that the Princess could do to them would be to steam away and leave them; and were there no other ships? He was hungry, and beginning to be very thirsty, but he was not in the least afraid.

He was down on his knees by Dick before the sling was half way up the steamer's side.

"Ar-r-re ye awake, Mr. Dicky? Can ye hear?"

Dick smiled, and opened both his eyes.

"Then, 'tis what I feared! Listen—listen, laddie! Listen, sir! 'Twas a' verra fine to lay y'r head i' her lap, an' let her cuddle ye—I'd ha' done it masel', wi' half the opportunity—ou-aye, 'twas mebbe scrumptious, an' I dinna doot that ye enjoyed y'rsel'. But y'r puir head's been sair bangit, Mr. Dicky, an' y'r mem'ry's gane. Y're forgettin'. She's no' a frien' at a'—she's a verra weekid wumman, an' oor enemy! She's a bad ane. She's verra dangerous. Ye canna mak' love to her an' run awa', for she'll hang on like a bad smell to a piece o' meat. Mannie, she's i' love wi' ye—a fule cud see it—an' the de'il's ane wife 'ud be a better sweetheart for ye! Wull ye no listen?"

"Andry, you're an ass!" Dick was pale, and looked weak from bleeding, but his smile was like the sunshine.

"Ou-aye, I mind Balaam had an ass!"

"She had a great chance to grow intimate," laughed Dick; "but how much talking did we do? I heard you speak rudely, my man, but you don't know any better. I haven't even quarreled with her—yet!"

He sat up, and Andry sat down, to chew the cud of wonderment. Both of them watched critically then, as a boat was lowered from the Russian steamer's stern. It was a dingey, much like theirs, and two men could have managed it easily; but it held four. One sat in the bow with a boat-hook, and another in the stern, while two men rowed. They came alongside in silence, and Andry made haste to help them with the luggage; then he helped Dick to his feet, and was too busy for the moment being "verra carefu' " to notice what else might

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be going on. One of the Russians took Dick and helped him to the stern; then the Russian boat was full; there was no room for Andry, and he laid hold of the Russians' gunwale, that they might tow him along. It was simpler to be towed than to row himself.

HE YELLED with rage when a Russian struck his wrist with an oar-end. He reached for an oar to strike back. It was then he discovered that the oars were gone, and realized that the Princess kept short reckonings. She had not forgotten that he called her "Jezebel!" She was out of sight, but not for one fragment of a second did Andry doubt her authorship.

But she had built a little too much on the supposition that the big man could not swim. He gave Dick no time to make a plan for him or shout him orders, but plunged with a bellow like a bull seal taking water. He knew well enough what an oar could do, so he let the dingey go its way. He had seen what the Russians and the Princess had forgotten, and Dick laughed as he watched him swim for the Jacob's-ladder, with the sword between his teeth.

Too late, the Princess looked over-side to gloat at him. Too late she screamed an order. A mate and two seamen hauled at the ladder, but they hauled up Andry. They let go suddenly, but the ladder fell alone; Andry's toes and iron fingers had found purchase half way up the side. The giant sprang between them before they could think of seizing things to hit him with, and it was only the sight of Dick being helped out of the dingey on to the steamer's poop that prevented him from making bloody use of the claymore. He would have used it on the Princess first! But Dick was safe.

"Well done, my man!" smiled the Princess Olga Karageorgovich, stepping toward him. That smile had melted Andry once, in the hall of a hotel in Egypt. Now he glowered at her.

"Were you afraid they would not row back for you?" she laughed.

"An' there was naethin' left o' Jezebel excep' her han's an' feet!" he snarled, shaking his head, though not in answer to her question. She did not quite appreciate the nicety of his remark, for she had not his Calvinistic intimacy with the Bible; but she realized that her attempt to cover up had failed. Instantly her brain sought out new subtleties.

She had counted on a Dick who was unconscious and an Andry who could not swim—on a Dick who could be lied to about Andry, and perhaps—a little later—taught to love. But even as she and Andry faced each other, with an oath of deathless enmity on Andry's lips, Dick walked unsupported off the poop. He looked weak; he was bandaged here and there with fragments of her linen; but he could still walk like a king and look like one; and though the whole of her she-tiger's heart went out to him that instant, she recalled that diplomacy, and nothing less, could win the game she played. She made no advances —yet.

The steamer's shaft was turning. Andry's eyes were on the little boat that had saved their lives, and that floated now alone—deserted.

"Wull they leave yon dingey?" he grumbled. " 'Tis a sinfu' waste!"

Dick's eye followed his; and then the Princess touched Dick on the shoulder.

"Look!"

Her word was cut short by a rifle-crack. Flame spurted from the bridge-end, and a tiny puff of smoke. A *smack!* retorted from the sea, and it seemed as if the dingey shuddered. Everybody on the ship was watching—the man who held the rifle with pride, and the rest with rapt attention. Slowly, then faster, the little dingey filled. A wave flopped in above the gunwale. Then she lurched as her mother ship had done, and went whence ships do not return to carry tales.

"Good-by evidence!" the Princess laughed. "There goes the only link between—*US*—and Alexandria. *Monsieur le proscrit—monsieur le bandit*—permit me to congratulate you!"

In a word she made Dick her accomplice —placed him under obligation, and offered him the one way out.

Hatless, he saluted her—but ironically as the devil. Then he took one step backward, turned, and walked away. Andry turned on a scornful heel without troubling to salute, and followed up the deck.

She ignored Andry—was not conscious of him. But as her violet eyes watched Dick they lit strangely, and her lips seemed not so kissable, perhaps, as sometimes was the case.

"*Eh bien*, Monsieur Anthony of Arran!"

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she nodded after him. *"Monsieur le bandit —Monsieur le superbe—qui vivra verra!"*

Then she climbed to the bridge and talked more than a little with the Captain.

III

ENGLAND is not the only land, by many a baker's dozen, that produces gentlemen adventurers. There are restless men, of means and breeding, who hail, say, from East of Suez, from the South of Cape Horn, or from North of the Himalayas, who crave to take a hand in the game of happenings, and have the necessary pluck. Just such a man was Usbeg Ali Khan, the Afghan.

If his features were the least bit Jewish, and his skin light olive, he was none the less strikingly handsome on that account. His black beard set off the uniform, without which no Afghan gentleman would think his life worth while; and he had a different uniform, in a different color-scheme, for each conceivable occasion.

No man could look at him and doubt his claim to bravery; no woman could see him once and doubt his gallantry; and he was ready to prove either instantly. But he was courteous always, carrying politeness to the verge of ostentation, after the manner of his countrymen.

Beyond doubt he could be cruel, for he came of a race that is weaned amid cruel mountains; his lip, the curl of his nostril, and the corner of his eye betrayed as much. But he was a man whom seven other men had cared to follow to the end—wherever that might prove to be—from Afghanistan, through Persia, Asia Minor, Syria, and Palestine, to Egypt. Such followers are good; but he whom they follow must be better.

Like many another Afghan, his capital was invested in the neighborhood of eight per cent. with Bombay and Calcutta merchants. Nobody but he knew the total amount of interest he drew; but he drew on certain banks whenever he saw fit, and he could afford to clothe and horse his seven men as became a man of fortune, even if he paid them next to no wages.

One by one he had drawn blank the countries that he journeyed through. Persia had given promise, but nothing more; he had wearied of his search for a real patriot, with a real cause worth fighting for. Had he found such a man, Persia could have owned Usbeg Ali Khan from that minute, sword, following, and bank-account, for he would have dearly loved to ride a tilt at Russia. But Persia held nothing that he could find except lies and purchasable selfishness, so in the end he bought new horses for his men and journeyed on.

It was news of a Pan-Islam movement taking root in Egypt that brought him to Alexandria and Cairo. There cautious overtures on his part had been met by almost frantic offers; and, true to his type—with more than a grain of wisdom running through his recklessness, and with a fund of shrewd suspicion underlying all—he waited before deciding, no more committed than he needed be in order to keep in touch.

He found himself one of many thousand men, all sitting on the fence—all waiting for a leader. Alone of them, he touched none of Russia's money; not that he was scrupulous in such matters, but he chose not to commit himself to that extent. For a while, when the first excitement seized him, he had thought of offering himself as leader; but second and third thoughts prevailed, and he settled down to be encouraging and awfully polite, but to wait and watch guardedly. He could well afford to wait, and Cairo was not without attractions.

He amazed the British officers by his proficiency at polo, but forgot to tell them that he had played against their best in India, at Mount Abu and elsewhere. Once, for new amusement's sake, he engaged the British winner of the All-Egypt Cup for Swordsmanship, and beat him to his knees. On a subsequent occasion he got into trouble in a native village, by practising at pigeons with a pair of automatic pistols. His shooting was exquisitely nice, but the *fellaheen* have prejudices, and defended them with chunks of rock. He was lucky to escape from that mess without killing anybody, and even as things were it was only his connection with the "Movement" that saved him. The "Movement" owned a native judge, most of the newspapers, and the police of that district.

On the whole he enjoyed Egypt. But he grew weary of its peace, and he was ready for a move on Morocco, where they told him a rebellion was simmering beneath French rule. He had sold his horses and was inquiring about passage, when the word went around that "She" had a leader ready. So he hurried by train to Alexandria.

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Observant, as his countrymen all are, he admired Dick Anthony and Dick's giant attendant in the street. He even swaggered more himself, for having set eyes on such quiet dignity. Some time ago he had decided in his own mind that the Princess must be "She" who paid, and issued orders; but he did not connect her and Dick Anthony, and Andry, and the past and future and himself, until that night of nights when Dick and Andry burst into the crowded room like Resolution loosed, and he and a hundred more conspirators knew that instant that they had the man, if only he would lead and they dared follow.

When Dick swung the quivering blade above his head in proof of ownership, it had been Usbeg Ali Khan who shouted, "Zindabad Anthony Shah!" He had led the answering shout, "Long live King Anthony!" Last to leave the room at "Her" bidding, he had stood nearest to the door. He had seen Dick rip "Her" veil down and disclose the Princess Olga Karageorgovich. At her instant cry of "Kill him!" he had blocked the door a moment, for it suited him to see how this wonder of a man might quit himself, with half a chance. He had watched the fight spell-bound, while Andry backed Dick up with a broken chair, and Dick hewed—smashed—burst a road to the outer night and freedom. Almost—so nearly that he wondered what had held him—he had taken Dick and Andry's part.

Above all, though, he had heard the story of the sword, that a king named Alexander had presented to an Anthony. There is only one Alexander to the Afghans, or ever will be — but one magnificent Iskander. Nor was there ever such a sword, that he had seen, with such a beryl in the hilt. True, this Iskander was said to be of Scotland, wherever that might be; but did not the Great Iskander conquer all the earth? Scotland must be on the earth. The tale alone had been enough to fire his veins and his imagination; but the tale, and the sword, and the man, and the fight he made, considered all together—Allah! The mind of Usbeg Ali Khan was made up for better or for worse that night.

WITHIN five minutes he had sent his seven men hurrying through byways, with orders to scout fast, and bring word later. Within an hour they had tracked Dick down, and had brought him the name of the steamer, even, on which Dick waited for the dawn. Within five minutes of receiving that information, Usbeg Ali Khan was the only one of all that hesitating swarm who knew exactly what to do.

Some stayed and argued until the police arrested them. Some scattered wildly. Some lay low. Usbeg Ali hurried straight to the highest official he could find and laid bare the whole story as he knew it, naming names and stating facts. He knew his Englishmen. He treated the whole thing as a colossal joke, roaring with laughter as he recalled fresh details. He had sworn no vows; he owed no fealty to anybody; he broke no confidences, then. And he produced credentials; he laid bare his private record. He made the biggest man in Egypt listen to him, and believe him word for word.

And where rebellions, like epidemics, are inclined to blaze up between night and morning, Governments show speed first and deliberation afterward. A council met, two hours before dawn, and two of the men wore overcoats above pajamas. They considered, with amazing speed and detail, a host of things that ordinary men might overlook; and, being English, they had to be very serious or laugh. Usbeg Ali Khan had set the keynote for them.

Russia, they recalled, and England were supposed to be at peace. Moreover, Parliament was sitting, and the labor members would ask inconvenient questions. The Princess could not be arrested without scandal, but she would be sure to escape without scandal, if allowed to. Dick Anthony was known to be on board a ship. A battalion of Highlanders was due at dawn, and the battalion to be relieved had not marched out yet; therefore there were troops enough to handle any situation. No harm had been done, beyond the killing of a few known criminals in an obvious drunken brawl. Action might mean outbreaks everywhere. Inaction would mean that for months to come thousands of timid conspirators would tremble in their shoes, expecting hourly vengeance.

So they decided to do what the plotters had accomplished—exactly nothing. Only, men were sent to scare the Princess into flight, and other men to see that Dick Anthony did not return ashore. From Usbeg Ali Khan they were content to exact a promise of silence until he had left Egypt, and

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that, once having left, he would never, never, never come back again.

He swore—on the Koran and the Kaiber knife—exactly what they required of him, without hesitation, without a murmur, and in absolute good faith—but with a bright, quick twinkle in his eye.

Then he rushed in a hired cab to the different steamship-offices. The *Themistokles*, he soon discovered, was bound for Black Sea ports, with various calls between. He was able to find out, too, that Dick Anthony had booked for Trebizond on the Southern Black Sea shore, and his dark eyes glittered as he thought of the caravan route that winds away over the mountains at the back of Trebizond and penetrates the really interesting, lawless parts of Asia. He smelled adventure. He detected plan in his hero's wanderings!

There was another steamer bound for Trebizond, without any intervening stop, that would leave in two days' time and get there one day later than the *Themistokles*. He booked by it, for himself and seven men.

So, all unaware of the fate of the *Themistokles*, he disembarked one afternoon into a bumboat expecting to find Dick ashore there ahead of him. There are consulates at Trebizond, and banks, and agencies. He was able to cash drafts there, and ask questions of men who were well informed. So he learned the news—that the little *Themistokles* was what Lloyds call a "total loss." Dick Anthony and the Princess Olga Karageorgovich were named as having been among the passengers, and missing.

So, being an Afghan and a gentleman, he prayed to Allah for an hour, and then consoled himself with the reflection that he, at least, was alive, and free to seek adventure wherever Allah had seen fit to plant it. There was a caravan expecting to start over the mountains within a week, and as a fighting man with a fighting following he was something more than welcome.

He had about made up his mind to start with it, when a Russian steamer dropped anchor in the infamous bad roadstead, and rolled in the heavy Black Sea swell. There came bagpipe-music from her deck, and that occurred to him as strange; he knew bagpipe-music, for he had often heard the Highlanders and the Gurkhas; he even knew the real thing from the imitation, and his sensations were mixed as he recognized the lilt and swing of British battle-tunes.

Then a bumboat caught his eye. She was going off, to bring away an overdue consignment of tin-plate from the *Nizhni-Novgorod*. He made a quick bargain, and took a trip by her, gazing through field-glasses at the Russian steamer's decks, and commenting on what he saw through them with deep, strange-sounding Himalayan oaths that made the boatmen stare and grin.

"God only knows," he growled, "and time will disclose His plans. May I be there!"

IV

THE Princess Olga Karageorgovich appraised Dick at his real value. It was her business to read men and use them, and she had seen Destiny shine out of his extraordinary eyes. She had felt the disturbing thrill that genius excites in genius. She knew.

It was for herself she wanted him. She-tiger, that could hate, and wait, and spring from ambush, she could love as cruelly. The means to her end were any that came handy, just as Russia's are; and as surely as she knew herself for the velvet glove of Russia's unseen hand, she knew too that Russia was as cruel as herself.

A Princess of Russia who elects to be "political" has restless intrigue to build on and remorseless pressure for a spur. She must justify her choice, or else the land of the Czar engulfs her, and she is not. There are marriages, and end-of-the-world estates in Russia that are drearier than death in a forgotten graveyard, and the Czar's word is final; he gives in marriage when, and to whom, he will.

So she was married to no insufferable Muscovite; but she knew that if she were ever to have Dick for her own it was for Russia she must use him—with Russia's aid that she must win him—in Russia, by Russia's leave, in the Czar's good time that she must mature her plan. For the present she must steer Dick Anthony to Russia—and that seemed easy, seeing he had booked for Trebizond. He was now on the way to Trebizond; she took care that a mate should tell him as much in broken English, and she gathered—observing closely over the bridge rail—that the information delighted him, and put him off his guard.

Savagery is akin to love in certain

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natures. Dick was sitting on a coil of rope, with his head between his hands—sore from a dozen knife-cuts, dizzy with headache. Some people would not have needed to love him, but could have pitied him out of hand. Andry stood beside him, swearing to himself and watching preparations being made for the Princess Olga's comfort.

He saw the Captain's cabin made over for her use. He saw the first mate's cabin swept and washed and given to her maid. Double awnings were rigged in the starboard corner of the bridge, and a canvas weather-guard was lashed around it. He saw a deck-chair furbished up, and saw the Princess take her seat on it, almost out of sight in her screened-off place of vantage. And all the while dry blood was caking black on Dick's rough bandages.

But not even Andry, who had formed his opinion of the Princess, and like an honest Scotsman held it, divined her full intention. Not even he, who could believe no good of her henceforth for evermore, amen, could have persuaded himself that she meant to take advantage of Dick's pitiful condition, due to his gallant fight for her, and try to subjugate him by sheer cruelty, since he would not yield otherwise.

Each effort he had made for her at Dick's behest had hurt like an iron yoke, but the iron would have gone into his soul had he realized the full extent of what he did. Saving that great trunkful of clothes was the king-pin of her luck, and nearly the final touch to the ruin of his and Dick's. He and Dick were dripping; what clothes they wore were crumpled and awry; Dick wore bloody bandages; they looked like tramps, and were likely to look worse within a day or two, for there was little in the bag besides bagpipes and some underclothes. She had a maid, and a cabin, and a mirror, and a trunk that had been packed with discrimination.

The Captain and his crew might have questioned mere flotsam disarrayed, and they were at no pains to disguise their indifference for Dick and Andry. They might have adopted a tentatively hostile attitude toward the Princess even, after the first flush of her authority had worn away. But she stepped out of the cabin a Highness, dressed for the part, with lace and jewelry, Parisian lingerie, and a hat that was a dream of flowers. Century-trained serfdom bowed its head.

She made Dick no more overtures of friendship, nor did she pretend any friendship for him. The details of what she told the Captain never transpired, but she had the field to herself, and a wonderful imagination in addition to a sound, true basis for romance; she said enough to bring the Tartar out through the Russian's porous hide, and throughout the ensuing game the Captain took full responsibility without even realizing that he was being made a tool. The details of the indignity he heaped on Dick were his invention; the motive-power behind them was the Princess Olga.

She was on the bridge, half-hidden in her corner, when Dick essayed to brace himself and climb the bridge companion.

"Can I have quarters for myself and my man, captain?" he asked, with his foot yet on the last step up but one. "I'm under the weather a bit, and I'd like to lie down."

He tried his mother-tongue first, as a Scotsman nearly always will; and the Captain answered him in English.

"Get forrard!" he swore; and Dick—never hasty with conclusions—chose to believe that they had both misunderstood.

"Get forrard! Get—off—my—bridge!"

The voice and the words were ripe with all the insolence servility knows how to use. The effort to be roughly autocratic in an alien tongue added a touch of clumsy coarseness to the words that rounded the situation out and made it exquisitely loathly. Dick glanced at the Princess. She had heard every word of it, and she was smiling—looking straight in front of her. As plainly as the writing on a wall, her smile said once again: "Come nearer. Appeal to me!"

Dick's hand went into his pocket. "You can name your own price," he said; and one would have thought he was speaking to an equal, for his voice and attitude were almost casual. But there was some one on that ship, now, more powerful than the name of money.

"Son of a ——! You hear me say, 'Get forrard'?" That seemed to exhaust his English; he broke into French, and the second person singular he used was the polish on a jewel of speech whose facets scintillated.

He had said the unspeakable. He had offered gratuitous, blackguardly insolence, in the presence of a woman. His due, his place, then, was on his back with his front teeth crowding in his gullet. But Dick looked over to the stern at the Russian

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ensign—back straight at the Princess, and laughed. It was a catching laugh, without a note of music in it, but ringing none the less so true that one could almost fit words to it. The Princess knew that he knew it was war between them—knew instantly that he knew she wanted him in irons. She frowned to hide a smile, and he read through the frown. The Captain read the frown and misunderstood, or else overrated it.

THE rifle that had sunk the dingey stood in a corner of the wheel-house, loaded. In a second he had snatched it, and he held it very close to Dick, thrusting the stock out and his own chin at the same time, and patting the rifle till the sling-swivels jangled.

"See here! You see this?"

"Yes," said Dick; and he seized the rifle —twisted it with a sudden wrench that was irresistible—and spun it overboard. He looked the Captain straight in the eye a minute, apparently unmoved himself; the man was speechless. From him he looked at the Princess—as he might have looked, for instance, at a sea-gull, uncritically and dispassionately—then turned and went. As he descended the companion he did not even deign to guard his back; he seemed to know there was not enough manhood on the bridge to dare strike him from behind!

"Bring the bag, Andry!" he said quietly. "They've offered us the fo'castle. We'll take it."

He could hear up above behind him a little, beautiful, silvery laugh on an ascending scale; but if the Princess could have seen the smile in his eyes—if she had had virtue enough to let her read the freedom camped between his shoulder-blades—she might have spared herself the disappointment that was all any one could get from trying to conquer him. His was such strength of character that he did not even care to conquer her. He was a free man—unchainable—free of the earth and sea; not that he knew it at the moment, for he imagined there were warrants out for him. The Princess thought him already in the meshes of her net. It was Andry—the Scots barbarian—*"le monstre"*—*"le cannibale"*—who knew the truth about Dick, deep in his loyal heart, and who followed him up-deck to the fo'castle with as good will as if they had been assigned to first-class quarters on a liner. What suited Dick was good enough for him at all stages of the game. If Dick bled, he bled. He would rather be eaten than see Dick hungry. If Dick smiled, Andry could be satisfied in hell.

Andry pulled the fo'castle door open, and a rancid mixed stench of onions, garlic, and unclean men crept out to greet them. The first whiff drew a hurricane of Scots profanity from Andry, for he could swear like a border trooper when he was not saying prayers; but Dick's spirits rose at once; they always did when there was need.

There was no division down the center, as there usually is in steamship fo'castles; firemen and sailors shared a dim, disgusting den together. A dozen men sat up to glower as Dick strode in, and here and there a half-furtive laugh betrayed the mental atmosphere to be about as friendly as the material one. Andry gave back glower for glower, and cluck of Scots contempt for each snigger that he heard, but Dick walked straight on, up the middle, noticing nobody, but studying strategy.

There was a trap-door over the fore-peak, and a big ring in the floor to lift it by. Beyond the trap-door, crosswise of the ship and above a locker, there were two bunks, both occupied.

"We'll take those two bunks," said Dick; and Andry said, "Aye, sir!"

Dick stood aside, and looked around at his hosts, bunk by bunk. Andry laid the bag down, and passed him the canvas-covered sword; Dick held it just underneath the hilt, gathering in the slack of the canvas, so that it looked like what it was—a weapon. The Russians in the two bunks seemed to be asleep.

"Get oot, or I'll pull ye oot!" said Andry, suddenly enough and loudly enough to wake the dead; and the rapidity with which the man in the lower bunk produced a knife was proof enough that he had been awake and watching. Surely he did not understand what Andry said. Andry made a quick feint at him, and the man slashed at his wrist.

Then Andry pounced like a sparrow-hawk descending on a hedge-row. There was a swoop, two yells—and the knife went clattering against the bulwark at the farther end; after it, in quick succession—*thud! thud! thud!*—went a Russian, then another one, a chest, blankets, belongings; things that an Anglo-Saxon sailor would call ditty-boxes, onions, tobacco—everything, in fact, that the Russian sailors owned.

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"Keep the matches!" ordered Dick, as Andry came to the end of foraging.

"Aye; an' the soap!"

Dick's hand went in his pocket, and he tossed a silver coin into the middle of the medley, as payment for the loot; and though he did not expect instant friendliness, the speed of what followed took him by surprise. The ring of the falling coin had hardly died away before men leaped to the floor and rushed him. Intuition, more than reason, told him that robbery had been hinted at by the afterguard; the Princess had desired him to be robbed; she wanted him helpless. Reason, as well as intuition, warned the would-be thieves that they had better pause half way and think.

"Back to your bunks!" commanded Dick; and, though his words were foreign to them, the note in his voice was the same as the note of the shimmering sword-blade that licked out of its canvas bag and seemed to point straight—exactly—for the nose-bone between each separate pair of eyes!

"Back to your bunks!" he ordered again, once; and one by one the men lost heart until there were only four left facing him; then all those four lost heart together.

Dick laughed aloud. His wits were as quick as hers, and he told himself that if the Princess wanted him so much within her power, she surely would not have him killed just yet a while; the danger of death by her orders had passed with the rage of her disillusionment in Alexandria, until it should come again eventually with the understanding that he would not yield to her —ever—on any terms.

Hunger was his chief problem now; his own stomach had begun to gnaw, and he could imagine how Andry's huge appetite was clamoring. But even at that he did not relish the thought of eating in that filthy fo'castle, in an atmosphere some of which he would be forced to swallow first; nor did he mean to fight for food out of the "mess-kid" when it came, with the crew all around him like a ravening wolf-pack. He meant to eat, and sleep, and bathe himself somewhere where a human man might be at ease, and his eyes lit as he saw step one of his strategic moves develop to fruition.

One of the men who had been thrown out of his bunk crawled to the door, slipped out, and ran aft with his complaint to the Captain already stuttering from his lips.

"Lift that trap-door, Andry," he ordered.

ANDRY'S back-muscles bent into a bow of steel. He grunted, and his muscles cracked, but the trap-door lifted; the watch below lay still and gasped as four men's work was done by one. Slowly the giant lifted the trapdoor clear and set it on its end, disclosing darkness and a deep-sea smell.

"Take those," said Dick; and Andry's huge fist shut on a box of matches.

"Open the bag. Take out the pipes—yes, yours and mine, both. Give me mine. Now swing yourself down there and hunt for anything inflammable. They keep their spare waste in the fore-peak as a rule—you ought to find some down there. Search in the dark—don't strike a match until I tell you."

Obediently as a child, and trusting as a child—for he had seen the light in Dick's eyes, and he understood it—Andry swung his weight on to his hands and turned a circle. A moment he hung still by his eight fingers. Then he dropped, and his voice called, "It's no' a great drop, Mr. Dicky, sir."

"Is there a ladder there?" asked Dick.

"Aye. I've ma han' on it."

"Set it up, and then come get your pipes."

Soon Andry appeared head and shoulders through the opening, and gathered in his bagpipes as a mother takes a child. Dick saw the second evicted Russian make his escape through the fo'castle door.

"Hurry up and look for something that'll burn. What's all that smell down there?"

Ships coming from Jamaica, say, are as sure to carry a cask of rum somewhere on board as a stray dog is to carry fleas. Other ships, registering from the different Black Sea ports, are just as likely to have crude petroleum. They carry it much as a man may carry trinkets in his clothes, because of the association and without exactly knowing why. It was not in the least wonderful that the first thing Andry ran his nose into in the gloom of the fore-peak was a barrel of petroleum. He sniffed at it, smelled again, tasted the drippings with a tentative forefinger, and announced his discovery with glee.

"Anything else?" called Dick.

"Waste, sir—half a bale o' it—opened up."

"Can you get the plug out of the barrel?"

There was silence for a minute, while

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Andry sought for the plug, and found it.

"Aye, it's oot. It's runnin' oot."

"Let it run. Dip a pound or two of waste in it."

"Aye."

"Can you make a torch out of that?"

Andry hunted swiftly, his great arms outstretched in the darkness, and his fingers analyzing everything he touched.

"Aye," he called presently, "I've found some wire."

"Good. Let the petroleum run. Come up here, and stand on the ladder with your torch."

Once more Andry's head appeared above the level of the deck. He was grinning hugely this time, for the Scots are not slow-witted; he knew exactly at whose mercy the whole ship, crew and cargo were, for there was no more than a wooden bulkhead between him and the hold.

"Have you the matches safe?"

"Aye, in ma pooch."

"Tune up, then!"

Together—one on the deck, and the other's head appearing just above the deck—they filled the leather bags of their instruments with wind, while the Russians watched and wondered. Dick's head ached as if it would split, but he laid the strange sword down at his feet and gave his whole attention to the effort. Together, like the battle-hum of a hundred million hornets, their drones began, and the startled Russian sailors sat upright in astonishment.

"'Scots Wha Hae'!" said Dick abruptly; and their chanters—both together—lifted to the tune.

Scotland weeps to that tune—weeps and swears—goes wild to it. Of all that Robbie Burns wrote, and of all the Highland melodies, there is none that kindles fire so readily in strong men's hearts or that has sent more kilted regiments a-thunder up the hill to glory. It breathes defiance, deviltry, and disregard; it flings the gauntlet into England's teeth, and the rest of the world's with England's. Over and over again, a hundred times, it has wakened a drowsy battle-line. Along with the "Wearin' o' the Green" and another treasonable tune or two, it has spurred and whipped and called and led the junior partners of the Union until a height was scaled, or a ditch was filled with dead—and another victory passed to the count of England on the books.

The fo'castle of the grimy *Nizhni-Novgorod* seemed to reverberate and swell. The bunks were emptied one by one, as the battle-music stirred in the lees of Muskovy, and even the Russian seamen laughed, swung their hips to it, and shuffled with their big flat feet. Louder and louder skirled the pipes, fiercer, more defiant, till the whole ship was awake like a hive of bees, and the decks clattered as men raced over them to see.

THE door was pulled open suddenly, and the Captain looked in over the heads of six men; he was standing on a bucket at the rear of them. At a sign from Dick the music ceased with a suddenness that seemed to puncture ear-drums.

"Come in, Captain," smiled Dick; "nobody's going to hurt you!"

The Captain seemed to hesitate. It was perfectly evident to Dick that he was holding a revolver and did not want it seen.

"Light your torch, Andry!" he directed.

Andry struck a match. The torch flared up smokily. There was an instant rush for the door by all hands, and the Captain was borne backward along the deck by the stampede. He fought against it, though; he seemed to be finding courage somewhere, and he made a fine show of authority as he swaggered back, straight in through the door.

"Take a seat, Captain!" suggested Dick.

"What in hell is this?" he flustered, once more exhausting nearly all his command of English in one explosive sentence.

"A torch," smiled Dick. "*Un flambeau*, Captain. We've discovered some petroleum below here. We've pulled the plug out, and everything below is wet with it—smell it, can't you, from where you are? Thought so."

"Got-damn! Say that again!"

Dick translated into French for him. It did not suit his purpose to admit that he knew any Russian; the bitter truth, that he had failed for an examination by studying live Russian instead of dead Sanskrit, was sufficient in itself, and he did not care to revive the memory—until the memory were useful.

"You see, Captain, the ship's at our mercy." He was speaking very slowly, in very evenly spaced French. "The point is, what's her safety worth to you? We came aboard expecting civil treatment, whereas you behaved like a brute beast—which of

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course you are—and treated us like dogs, which we are not by a long way. We propose, now, to travel as first-class passengers, or else to burn the ship!"

"There is no license to carry passengers. I may not," vowed the Captain.

"That's your end of the rope, my man. You're going to do it, or down goes this torch into the petroleum! I'm making terms, not you. Your job is to agree to 'em—and quickly, for we're hungry. Go back and fetch pen and ink, paper, and a witness!"

The Captain swore. He blustered. He threatened law at the first port. But at each new argument the torch went lower into the fore-peak. At last Andry disappeared, to pour new oil on his waste, and then the Captain capitulated; he thought that his hour and his ship's had come.

He brought a table and wrote out a manuscript, in French, at Dick's dictation; and Dick's details were specific. A mate was sent for to witness the signature, and the Captain had to read the whole document aloud to him before Dick would be satisfied.

An engineer's cabin was to be made over to them at once. They were to have their meals brought to them there, and to have the undisturbed use of it. They were to have a meal at once, and after that three meals a day—plenteous—and the best that the ship could provide, direct from the Captain's table. They had the run of the whole deck, but the poop was reserved, as first-class deck, for their especial use and benefit; and they agreed on their part not to trespass on the bridge.

Finally—though this was not stated in the written agreement—he, Dick, was to be given a revolver for their protection and to enable him to enforce the contract afterward. The Captain put up his greatest fight over this verbal clause; but he had to give way—Andry was reckless, and shook sparks down into the fore-peak. He gave up the one he carried, in the end—tossed it to Dick, unloaded, and threw the cartridges after it.

At the end of the document was a written statement that for the accommodation bargained for the charge would be ten pounds English. For that sum, of which the Captain thereby acknowledged the receipt, they were to be carried to Trebizond or to any other Black Sea port to which Dick and Andry might elect to travel. Dick pulled out a ten-pound note from the wallet stitched to a belt beneath his shirt, and paid him.

The Captain seemed relieved and satisfied. After all, ten pounds was a hundred rubles—better than a burned ship at the bottom of the sea, and a ticket endorsed accordingly. He seemed quite sure that, had he not agreed, the threat Dick made would have been carried out to the letter. Dick was a convincing player of a strong hand, when he held it.

"I think we shall part company at Trebizond," said Dick. "That will relieve you, Captain, of the necessity for explaining away the no-passenger-license business. We won't talk. You must do the rest of the muzzling yourself!"

They walked together down the deck, stared at stupidly by a crew who wondered where the leg-irons were. And such was Dick's charm when he chose to exert it that in spite of warfare not five minutes gone the Captain struggled already with an inclination to take his arm and support him to the cabin. It was the first time Dick had had a chance to talk to him civilly. He spoke, now, for perhaps two minutes, as fellow man to man in the open air; in that two minutes he undid all that the Princess had accomplished, and left the Captain wondering why in the name of Russia he had not treated this good fellow like an emperor from the first.

"In the name of God, of where are you a king?" he asked him; and Dick gave another of those strange, strong, unmusical laughs that always seemed to make men raise their heads and look him in the eye.

V

A HUNDRED times at the very least, up through the Sea of Marmora, on through the Dardanelles, into the Black Sea, Dick thought of demanding to be set ashore at the nearest port—and then thought better of it. It was a devil of a situation—horned and hot. Independence was the salt of life to him; he was self-contained, self-controlled, generous; the worst part of the experience was the sense of being interfered with.

He did not think of vengeance on her once. He could have forgotten his annoyance even, if he could but have lost sight of her. Being truly a gentleman, he loathed the thought of pitting his strength of mind

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or muscle against a weaker thing, and asked no more than to be allowed to take and keep his own line, in his chosen time and way. So he chafed, for there were bigger things in store for him than he would have believed, and Dame Fortune has a practical, rough way of teaching men who are men enough to butt their heads into the pricks and learn.

He wanted no Princess of Muskovy or any other land to mark out limits for him; but there she was, smiling, sunning herself on the bridge in a Paris hat—considering, he knew well, plans for a new attempt, and blissful meanwhile in the knowledge that she was drawing each hour nearer to her native land—he farther away from his.

If he had swallowed his stiff pride and gone home to face inquiry, as he thought more than once of doing, he would have saved himself a world of trouble; but Dame Fortune, when she means a man to win, lures him or drives him with any weapon to her hand, pride, fear and foolishness by no means excluded. He had a place in the world that a lesser man could never fill. It was waiting for him; so pride pricked him away from home.

Weaned on, educated in, dependent for her living on conspiracy, the Princess knew how to pick the weak place in a strong man's armor. She knew his weakness to consist in lack of plan. She knew that no plan of his own choosing would include herself, and that, once arrived at, he would see it through to an end or perish. She wanted him alive, not dead. Therefore her plan was to prevent him from making any until she could thrust one, ready-made, under his nose and make him mistake it for his own.

Her love for Dick, which was all of her life by this time, was not a "grand passion"of the sort that blinds to everything except passion. She loved him with the whole of her ferocious, feline heart, but because he was far more than good-looking; in fact, that tawny hair of his and those strange eyes obeyed no rules that artist ever recognized. She loved him because he was better than herself, infinitely nobler, because he was Dick Anthony, tawny and strong and clean —prouder than she, and resolute. She planned just now to undermine his resolution by making him change plans as quickly as he made them!

Without committing the belief to actual shape in her mind, she had come to believe that she and Fate were sister servants of the Russian Empire; it was nothing to astonish her when Fate, arm-in-arm with Usbeg Ali Khan, who was a fatalist by birth and creed, conviction, necessity and inclination, produced an unexpected card and played it straight into her hand.

She was content to do nothing so long as Dick's aim was Trebizond, and Trebizond lay still ahead. But the Black Sea begins, these days, to be a Russian lake, and once they were in it, headed eastward, she began to work on the Captain to omit his call on the southern shore.

"Steam straight for Batum!" she urged him.

But Dick's strong personality had already too far undermined her influence. There was a consignment of tin-plate in the hold for Trebizond, and the Captain made that good enough excuse for firm insistence on his course. He quoted law. So she decided on a master stroke that would disarm Dick Anthony and leave him free apparently to go his own way, yet that would surely bring him to her goal.

"I have changed my mind," she told the Captain. "I, too, will leave the ship at Trebizond."

Her mind made up, she made no secret of her plan, but told the maid to drag the trunk out where Dick Anthony could see it, and to pack it in full view. Finally she bribed the steward to drop hints of her intention. Dick seemed indifferent to hints, so the steward told him outright, but he was not able to extract any return information to take back to the bridge. Dick's bag was locked and Andry had the key, but that was usual; there was no sign of any plan or of a change of plan.

Dick began to think that the end of interference was in sight; but, besides being golden-hearted and generous, he was young. He knew utterly nothing about women, and did not want to know. When they came in sight of battlemented Trebizond and the promontory that sticks out to catch the Black Sea silt, he was standing amidships, lost for a minute in amazement. The huge rocks and the age-old fortress perched on the summit of them struck a tender, appreciative chord in his memory. The Princess, coming softly down the bridge-companion, caught him unawares.

"Good-by, my enemy!" she smiled; and

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she held out a hand as Dick spun around to face her.

"Good-by!" There was humor—good-natured humor—in eye and voice and attitude. She sensed it instantly.

"I leave the ship here. I understand that you intend going ashore, but I don't expect we shall meet again—ever. I hope to get a lift on a gunboat to the Crimea. I'm sorry you won't let me be of service to you. I am glad I met you. Good-by, my enemy!"

She held out her hand, ungloved. She smiled, too. Her violet, velvet eyes looked a little moist, or so Dick thought. The disappointment in her voice brought to his mind the picture of a naughty little girl resigned to punishment. After all, who was he, Dick Anthony of Arran, gentleman, to judge a woman harshly—to bear a grudge against a woman? He could forgive—it was his privilege. He held out his hand instantly.

He was a man of men, and she a tigress among women; it was probably the sight of Andry that enabled her to draw her hand back and refrain from throwing both arms around him. Andry overshadowed his master from the rear, and was not looking pleased; dour and dry, his lips moved to the consonants of "Jezebel!" and his freckles twitched amid the wrinkles in a way that meant, "Han's off!"

"MAY we part friends?" she asked. "I mean to remember always that I owe my life to you and your servant." (Andry clucked dryly, like a hen that thinks of laying presently.) "I would like to remember you in your best mood; won't you do something characteristic, just to oblige me before I go? Won't you and your man get out your strange instruments and play a Scottish tune for me? I have heard him play. I want to *see* you play—to carry it away in my memory."

Dick, too, was something of a sentimentalist. He had to admit it to himself sometimes, when his eye was wetter in one corner than it ought to be and there was neither dust nor wind to make excuse. He did not demur. It was a good excuse, too, for getting away from her. He and Andry went to their cabin, and two minutes later strode out together on the poop with that swing of the hips that a Scotsman keeps for bagpipe-music.

"Should Auld Acquaintance" was appropriate enough; it skirled across the water, very likely for the first time since the Highland regiments played it coming back from the Crimea. Dick's heart nearly burst inside him as the tune swelled, and he thought of his coming freedom from female interference; he played as he had never yet done, and between them they made melody enough to wake the dead. So a signalman on a near-by Russian gunboat came out of a day-dream—heard, looked, used his telescope—and understood.

Neither Dick nor Andry saw the Princess Olga's maid down on her knees by the bridge-rail on the port side, waving, waving, waving the same signal over and over again. But the gunboat lowered a motor-launch; and as the *Nizhni-Novgorod* dropped anchor half a mile out from the silted "harbor," the launch came alongside, flying a Russian ensign. Almost before the ship had lost her way a Russian naval officer was standing on the unwashed deck, talking earnestly to the Princess and making no attempt whatever to conceal the fact that Dick was the object of his conversation.

"Damn!" swore Dick. If he had to be arrested he would have preferred his own countrymen! Already a revulsion of feeling swept over him, and he regretted having shaken hands.

"I might have guessed she would betray me at the first chance!" he muttered.

But no arrest came yet. He watched them swing a derrick overside, saw the Princess, her maid, the trunk, and the officer all lowered into the boat, and saw the boat start off. He crossed, then, to the other side of the poop to watch its course, and he swore to and at himself again as he noticed that the Princess and the officer were both laughing.

"Laughing at me, no doubt!" he muttered.

Andry leaned on the other side, about amidships. He was interested in the bumboat coming out in the wake of a prehistoric tug, very much interested in a man in uniform who might or might not be a Turkish officer—light-olive-skinned, black-bearded, straight, who stood in the stern and peered through binoculars.

The bumboat came alongside, and the work began at once of lowering the tin-plate into it. The man in uniform came up the Jacob's-ladder slowly, like a landsman, and made amends for it by jumping the rail at

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the top as an active man might mount a restive horse.

He walked straight up to Andry and saluted him half ironically, smiling as an artist might to a master artist.

"I am from Alexandria!" he said in English. "I have come to offer my salaams to Mr. Anthony."

"Ye have, eh?"

"I am his friend. I have seven men in Trebizond who serve me. We all offer our salaams."

"Ye're his frien', ar-r-re ye? I ken y'r face weel. You an' I foucht on diff'rent sides a while ago, an' I'm his frien' surely. So, ane o' us twa's lying!"

"Present my compliments to him!" said the man in uniform, "and let me speak to him myself. Tell him I say I am his friend."

"Wait here, then!" commanded Andry, showing him a knotted, freckled fist. "Dinna move a foot till I come back!"

He hove himself up on to the poop and clutched the rail beside Dick on the other side of the ship.

"Mr. Dicky, ye ken that black-faced mon who led the cheerin' back in Alexandria —who called oot 'Sinbad,' or some such word, an' set t'ithers to yellin' for ye? Ye do? Ye remember him? Aweel, he's doon yonder an' wants to speak wi' ye."

Dick stepped across the poop and stared hard at the man who waited, then drew out of sight again.

"Is there no such thing as a lost scent—ever?" he asked. "So that's why they were laughing, eh? Pan-Islam movement, eh? Headquarters, I suppose, in Trebizond. Think they can drag me in here as easily as there! Tell the man I haven't a word to say to him, Andry!"

Andry obeyed. It was a task agreeable to himself, one that he knew he could perform properly.

"Gang awa'!" Dick heard him ordering; but the rest of Andry's monologue was interrupted by the Captain calling from the bridge in French, and one can not listen to two different languages at once.

"If you're going ashore, the bumboat's going now, Mr. Anthony!" he called. "You'd better hurry!"

"I'm going on to Batum with you!" answered Dick.

Ten minutes later Dick and the Princess stared at each other from the sterns of two different ships, and a third man swore as he stared in turn at each of them, through binoculars, from a bumboat loaded with tin-plate.

"*Bismillah!* Have I come thus far to fail?" he asked himself. "Or may others, too, take steamer to Batum—others and their servants? Allah! But he is a proud man, that Anthony!"

VI

THE wireless apparatus on the gunboat crackled, and an argument went out that was borne on sparks enough to keep the Batum operator on his mettle. No less than a lieutenant-governor was drawn into the discussion; his questions were curt, but the answers to them took twenty minutes each to send. Meanwhile the gunboat got her anchor up and steamed in a wide semicircle, making nearly two knots to the *Nizhni-Novgorod's* one. The gunboat was leading—out of sight—by the time that night fell.

So a procession steamed along—headed by the Princess—followed by Dick Anthony, who thought himself free at last—and brought up at a quite considerable distance in the rear by a third party of eight men on a coasting-steamer; they were swarthier than the other passengers, and differently dressed; they kept themselves very much aloof, talking only to each other and obeying without question one of their number who strode the deck restlessly and wore Eastern military garb.

It was a usual enough procession; there was nothing about it to excite comment on the Black Sea, where the West and the East are forever mingling, and nobody ever dreams of questioning the movements of a Russian gunboat. None of the parties to it knew how much history they would combine to make, even though one or two of them were innocent of peaceful motives.

Usbeg Ali Khan, for instance, was an optimist as well as a fatalist; he may have been dreaming of slit throats and the hewing of an empire. The Princess knew herself so well for a most important part of Russia's secret mechanism that she had ceased long ago to compare herself with other people or to think of any destiny unlinked with Russia's. Dick Anthony—much the most colossal figure on that stage, if he had known it—believed himself an

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ill-used gentleman, in search of peace and a place where he might forget and be forgotten. He felt very unimportant and very miserable.

At Batum Dick gave the Captain his revolver back, with a laugh and a handshake, and drove straight to a shop where English ready-made clothes were on sale at most terrific prices. There he fitted out himself and Andry, so that they were at least presentable when they arrived at the hotel. A man in a blue suit made gestures to the hotel-keeper from behind Dick's back, and Andry made ready for reprisals; but Dick was permitted to register unquestioned—to sign himself shortly "Dick Anthony," and to write no more than "Scotland" in the second column of the page; he knew too little of Russia yet to wonder why the hotel-keeper did not demand his passport.

Later, after they had turned the hotel inside out and produced a bath for him, he left Andry behind and went off exploring in a cab; and though he was followed everywhere by a man in uniform in another cab, he was beginning to feel almost like the old Dick Anthony who did not care who watched him. When the other cab was stopped, and the man in uniform stepped out of it; when he climbed into Dick's own cab and invited him, very politely, to drive to the Bureau of Police, the sensation was like being plunged out of Summer into Winter.

He made no objection, of course, but his feelings as the driver changed direction are not to be imagined. Surely he regretted he had come beyond Trebizond! Turkey-in-Asia, he told himself, would never have asked questions. As he followed his guide into the gloomy building he felt like a man walking to the scaffold. He might have felt less sad inside himself, and rather more really amused if he could have known what impression he produced; he was smiling, and his chin was high; given an ermine cloak and spurs he would have looked like a king going to his coronation.

To his amazement a very polite official presented him with a passport, ready made out to "Richard Anthony, Esquire, of Arran in Scotland—a gentleman of leisure, traveling for his own amusement, and accompanied by Andrew Macdougal, his servant." He was given a second passport as well, for Andry.

"How did you get the details?" wondered Dick.

The official smiled. "Systems," he said in French sententiously, "were devised for the convenience of gentlemen as well as for the inconvenience of rogues!" And Dick knew, from his voice and manner, that the system of police espionage had nothing in the world to do with it.

"Wireless!" he thought, and he made a new plan on the instant. He would solve the whole problem by returning home! This business of being hounded by police was not good enough!

"Thanks," he said, "but I sha'n't need this. I shall be leaving Russia by the first boat I can get passage on."

"Leaving for where?" asked the official, with a sudden change of voice. He was still polite, but the suavity was gone.

"For home," said Dick.

"I'm afraid not, Mr. Anthony! There is a charge against you. It must be investigated before you may leave Russia."

"Then what did you offer me a passport for?" demanded Dick.

"So that you might travel where you will, in Russia. On Russian soil you can be brought to account at any time for acts of yours committed on a Russian ship—piracy, for instance! There is no desire to inconvenience you more than necessary; but there is a—ah—a witness, whose deposition must be taken, who is not here. In the meantime you may go where you will in Russian territory."

"Is that witness in the Crimea?"

The official did not answer.

"Then you mean that I'm under arrest?"

"Since you elect to use that word."

DICK closed his lips and his chin assumed an angle that was far more eloquent than a thousand arguments. The official leaned forward conciliatingly.

"You overlook a few things, Mr. Anthony. Our attitude is very friendly—very considerate. We appreciate your position fully. We know what news of your arrest would mean to you, should it reach England. Our laws are not like yours; ours give us wide discretion in such matters, and we had hoped that you would have been cleared of this charge without even knowing of its existence. Hence the passports. Without them you can not travel about;

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with them you can amuse yourself where you will, while this investigation runs its course. You will understand that piracy is not a charge which can be lightly overlooked; however ridiculous, it must be investigated."

"Thanks," said Dick. "I'll wait at the hotel. I can't afford to travel about."

The official opened a drawer, drew out two cards, signed them, and passed them to Dick.

"Make use of these, Mr. Anthony."

"What are they?"

"Official passes on the main Transcaucasia Railway. Take a look at the Caspian and come back. Batum is unhealthy."

Dick was prevailed on to accept the passes, for that did not imply the obligation to make use of them. He fully intended to return them unused, for he was thinking, now, only of racing back home to clear himself. The sudden switch from one plan to another was doing to him just what the Princess had intended. He drove back to his hotel in dreary dudgeon, too gloomy to observe that an Afghan gentleman was waiting for him on the steps.

"My name is Usbeg Ali Khan," said a voice. "Will you speak with me?" And Dick looked up into a pair of eyes that were as steady as his own.

The man was standing on the top step but two. Andry had pushed him off the top one, and was threatening further violence, but was restrained from it for the present by the owner of the hotel.

"I am listening," said Dick.

"Nay, sahib! I come offering a service; I demand your courtesy; I would speak where we can not be overheard!"

Dick hesitated. The man looked like a gentleman and stood like one; there was no ruffianly bravado about him, nor any sign of cringe. Service, at that minute, had a welcome sound. But Dick remembered him and where he had met him last.

"I have a servant," said Dick. "One is all I can afford." And Andry clucked on the step above with an air of having heard a final answer given.

"I have seven servants, sahib. We are eight."

"I haven't anything to offer you," said Dick, moving forward, and the Afghan, who was considered a nobleman beyond the Himalayas, had either to eat his pride or leave. He went with a courtly salute which Dick returned punctiliously; even Andry saluted him, for the Afghan looked, spoke, strode, and argued like a man.

"Pack the bag, Andry!" commanded Dick. "We've got to get away from these people or they'll give me no peace. I'll go and find out when the trains leave. We'll take a look at the Caspian and then come back."

So Dick took train to Baku after all, getting off to look at Tiflis on his way. But Tiflis was too civilized, with its tree-lined streets and ducal palace; Dick was becoming desperate—something like the Dick again who set his course for the open sea and fought with the fury of the whole Atlantic. He thought of taking the omnibus that plies over the mountains for Vladikavkaz, but that, too, looked too tame and too regulation-bound. He did not know that the finger of Destiny was beckoning him to be present at the birth of happenings; he knew only that the restlessness which had brought him away from home was beginning to overcome the sense of being wronged. He was beginning again—and he did not know why—to care less what England and the clubs at home might think about him, and to care more for Dick Anthony's clean, clear-minded point of view. He got back into a train and journeyed farther eastward, chiefly because home was the other way and eastward there were open spaces—deserts, tablelands, that perhaps a man might gallop over into freedom.

So he and Andry came to Baku, and thought they had come to hell; for the light from a burning oil-well flared with a roar against a savage sky, outlined a ruined, battlemented township, shone on a silent, dreary waste of sea; and a din went up around them that was the voice of a dozen peoples and a dozen problems mixed in a Russian melting-pot. Dead fish, stale garbage, crude petroleum blended to make atmosphere. The traces of dead nations stood crumbling amid the hastily raised workshops of as many living ones. And something told Dick Anthony that this was the pushing-off place into worlds worth a strong man's while, where age-old chivalry was not yet dead, and a man might strike for what seemed good to him.

He forgave the Princess, whose interference sent him here; forgave his uncle, whose greed had been the severed leash that loosed him. As he stood staring at the

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Caspian he forgave Fate, who had seemed so cruel to him. Suddenly, and without knowing why, he knew himself for a free man, free to journey forward but never to retreat; free to be the man he sometimes dreamed himself, leading a million other men to a new, enormous freedom over the ruin of the ranks of them who blustered. God, how he hated bluster!

"What is it, Mr. Dicky, sir?" asked Andry.

"Nothing. Only—we're going on from here."

"Where to, sir?"

"Dunno, Andry. But we're going. I've got it in my bones."

"Ye ken weel I'll gang wi' ye to the end o' the world, Mr. Dicky, sir. Lead awa'! Lead on!"

Andry gripped the old claymore in its canvas bag, and shook both himself and it —as a hound shakes when he turns to sniff the wind. He, too, felt the sap of doings moving in his bones.

VII

THERE, where the pipe-lines come together and the trains of oil-cars back down, screaming, to be filled—while a southeast hurricane played hell with the anchored shipping, and dyed the whole firmament dull red with the borrowed flame from a burning oil-well—the devil came and tempted Dick Anthony.

He had been in Baku days already, wandering about and wondering at the ebb and tide of West and East—of old and new, of raw, red Christian greed, and Islam, and idealism—not really caring where he wandered, so busy was he drinking in his first drafts of the Orient. Everywhere Andry followed, patient as Job but savagely distrustful. Nowadays—particularly since Dick's prophetic outburst—he did not even trust the locked bag behind, but lugged it everywhere, ready against all conceivable contingencies. Dick laughed at him, but Andry had his way; he, bag and sword were all Dick had except a sum of money, and Andry would have shepherded the money too, if Dick would have let him.

Dick stood, one evening, between two lines of oil-trains, watching to see how quickly they were filled; and a Persian in semi-Persian dress slipped underneath the couplings of two cars and spoke to him. Andry closed in instantly, but a motion of Dick's hand sent him back again into the shadows.

"Who are you?" demanded Dick.

"I am from Muhammad Ali Mirza."

Even Dick, who knew no politics, knew the name of the exiled Shah of Persia, knew he was supposed to be living in Odessa, knew of the various attempts that he had made to recover his throne; and knew, as all the world knows, of the infamy the Russian Government has earned by "looking on."

"What about him?"

"His Highness sent for you. His Highness has an offer he would make you."

"Oh," said Dick, as noncommittally as though the man had quoted the price of a horse.

The man waited, and Dick looked at him from head to foot, and from foot to head again.

"I am not lying," said the messenger.

"Come along, Andry!" said Dick; and he made a sign to the man to lead the way.

Within ten minutes he and Andry stood in the dark courtyard of an old dismantled fortress. Two lanterns swung from the hands of men who looked like Cossacks, and threw a fitful light on about two dozen other men, some of them in Persian garb, who sheltered from the howling wind under one of the ruined walls.

"I am Muhammad Ali Mirza," said a voice; and Dick tried hard to see the man through the gloom, but he stood in the deepest shadow.

"I am Shah of Persia."

He spoke in French, though for the moment Dick did not stop to think what the language was. A world, and then another world of possibilities were streaking past his eyes in panorama. Then Dick answered him in Persian, speaking fluently and grammatically, so that some other men half-hidden in the shadows gasped.

"I know of you. I have heard more than a little of you. What do you want with me?"

"The use of that sword of yours," said the same voice, whose suaveness was so evidently forced and whose rasp so evidently real. The ex-Shah, too, spoke in Persian. Dick held out his hand, but Andry did not understand him; Dick had to take the sword by the middle. It had been in either his or Dick's possession ever since

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the night when they recovered it in Alexandria.

"My sword is my own!" said Dick, drawing it from the canvas cover. It was a wonderful old sword; even in the dark the shape of it seemed business-like, and the men in front drew back a half step. But eight men on the right closed in—they surged in—and one of them touched the sword-blade; he went down on one knee while he examined it. Then he looked up in Dick's eyes, and Dick recognized him—Usbeg Ali Khan!

"Are you in the service of the Princess Olga Karageorgovich?" demanded Dick in Persian.

"My sword is my own!" laughed the Afghan, standing straight; and Dick looked him in the eyes, by the light of a cheap oil lantern, in the gloom of a storm-swept Caspian night—and liked him. Usbeg Ali and his seven took stand behind Dick then, and though Dick would have shown fight rather than let the men who faced him turn his rear, he had made up his mind in that second about Usbeg Ali Khan. The man had a dark skin—yes; but he was a gentleman. Andry was very restless and suspicious, turning the broad of his huge back to Dick and watching the eight Afghans as a tiger eyes his kill; but Dick looked straight ahead, and stood at ease.

"So, this is the pushing-off place, is it?" he was saying to himself.

Some other men might have been disposed to cringe a little in the presence even of exiled royalty. But Dick kept his hat on. He had doffed it once, when he was first addressed, and that was sufficient for all purposes. They had failed, yet, to lower his chin by a fraction of an inch, or to suggest to him the need for asserting his manhood either; his attitude was that of a man who is rather interested.

Whether the men in the dark beside the exiled Shah were Russian or Persian, they at least had studied men. They realized that Dick must be handled directly, and not indirectly—candidly, with no more lies admixed than were necessary for the saving of their souls. He was an idealist—any man could see that, even by lamplight—but his ideals were his own, not other men's. They saw that they had to make out a case, and a strong one, or they might as well talk to the raging Caspian as Dick.

So the ex-Shah—never, even in his dreams, more than a puppet of the Czar—kept out of it, pacing up and down and letting himself be seen, but lending nothing more than moral weight to his discussion.

"LET me talk to him!" said a man in Persian uniform; but he spoke in Russian, and he pushed the other men aside with an authority that suggested the Cossack officer. Then he spoke to Dick in French, with enough Persian interlarded to create—perhaps—the impression of a Persian speaking French. He beckoned Dick close up to the wall, a little away from the rest, and began at the beginning—which surely was not Eastern, of the East. Nor was his knowledge of the situation limited to what a Persian might be expected to grasp within a day or two.

He knew all about Dick, it seemed, and as he shepherded him nearer to the wall under the watchful eye of Andry, he saw fit to recall, detail by detail, the incidents that had brought Dick to his present pass. And—since lies were in order, if Dick did not know the truth—he spoke of an extradition warrant that the British Government was now moving heaven and earth and the embassy to get.

"Your position is unthinkable!" he assured Dick sympathetically.

He went on to assure Dick that the Princess Olga Karageorgovich was so filled with regret at her share of responsibility for his position that she had used her influence to bring about this meeting with the Shah, who was now, for the third time, about to make a desperate attempt on Persia with the connivance of Russia.

"Once in Persia, with Muhammad Ali Mirza on the throne, the British Government can never extradite you!" he assured him.

"I know nothing about Persia," answered Dick, "and I care nothing about the ex-Shah. Why choose me for this attempt?"

"You saw in Alexandria, surely, what your personality and the legend of that sword of yours can accomplish? Here you see once more. That man—the Afghan with his seven—was on his way homeward. He had already chartered a sailing-boat in which to cross the Caspian with his men, and he refused point-blank to make one of us; but the moment we suggested you might lead the expedition he changed his mind! He is here, now, ready to throw in his lot with you."

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"If *he* asked me to make *him* Shah," laughed Dick, "I might consider it. He looks something like a man."

"Listen, Mr. Anthony! Lend your sword to this attempt, and within three weeks you can have every fanatic in Persia howling to follow you. The Shah will be a figurehead; you the power behind the throne; Russia your firm friend."

Dick laughed, but said nothing. The picture was not uninviting.

"Consider the alternative."

"I have considered it. I intend to return to England, and face this matter of a warrant."

"Nay, nay, nay! First comes Russia, with her charge of piracy! Siberia, my friend! Siberia, for attempted arson on the high sea! Now! Will you lend your sword to the Shah of Persia?"

"No," said Dick; and he stepped back from the wall. He was thinking hard. The man who had argued with him went on speaking; there was a crack in the wall beside where Dick had stood, and the voice that whispered through it was a woman's.

"Are you thinking of going to Persia?" asked Dick, walking straight up to Usbeg Ali Khan.

"To Afghanistan, sahib, through Persia. First across the Caspian, by boat."

"Is the boat ready?"

"All is ready but the weather. No boat can start in this storm. Even the Russian gunboats dare not move."

Dick laughed again. "Will you start if I show you how?" he asked.

"Then you are for the ex-Shah?"

"No. I am against him."

"Then I, too! Sahib, I will start now for anywhere you name, and fight your enemies!"

"Come on, then!" said Dick. "Come on, Andry!"

"Arrest him before he gets away!" said a voice through the wall.

"Arrest him!" shouted the man who had argued vainly. Somebody blew a whistle, and there came the tramp of hurrying feet, in step.

"Cossacks!" swore Dick. "Are you armed?"

For answer Usbeg Ali Khan and his seven drew their swords.

"Our boat lies alongside the Katrinsky quay," said Usbeg Ali.

"Follow me, then!" answered Dick. They had tempted him with the prospect of a Shah's protection, with its corollary of wealth and license; but they had shown him the road to liberty! He would never have dreamed, but for that offer they made him in the night, of escaping into Persia where no king's writ could be made to reach. Now, though, the line of least resistance lay bright before his eyes, and he knew what his dream had meant!

"Forward!" he shouted.

"Comin,' sir!" yelled Andry. And the ten—compact and swift—burst through the extended ranks of a Cossack regiment that was busy surrounding the ruined courtyard. In the heat of that moment somebody yelled the wrong order, and a volley ripped out. Another company of Cossacks, doubling up, halted to fire too—and Dick and his men went through them as an avalanche goes through the pine trees.

It took the Russians ten minutes to ascertain which direction the fugitives had taken, and twenty minutes more to get authority to act. An hour after the wounded had been gathered up, a pursuing party stood on the Katrinsky quay staring through the murk at a sailing-boat whose big, unwieldy sail was disappearing in the night.

To left and right the Russian gunboats ducked and reeled at anchor. The shore, a mile or two beyond, was a litter of splintered shipping, and the town behind—roof-ripped—was shrieking in the wind. But two good Scots seamen, trained in the kyles of Bute, had done what the gunboats dared not do—had put to sea, had worn to windward by dint of sheer, stark courage and good seamanship, and were headed now for Persia with a dead-weight cargo of eight Afghans who knew nothing about sailing-ships.

Ashore, a Cossack officer turned his back and made for shelter. "That man will make trouble for us!" he asserted.

On board the plunging lake-boat, wet through but too full of admiration to be aware of it, the Afghan Usbeg Ali Khan lent his weight to Dick's on the wrenching tiller-bar and swore in his ear, "Sahib—the man who gat thee was an ancestor!"

The next adventure of *Dick Anthony of Arran* will appear complete in the next issue.

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By Hapsburg Liebe

THE' was five of 'em: Old Grandpap Torrey and his four children, Nancy, Ashby, Dave and Spivy, all better than grown. The menfolks they was all big and rawboned, and even Nancy she was taller and heavier than the average woman.

They lived in a ramblin' four-room cabin away back clost to the Nawth Ca'liner line, without a neighbor in two mile of 'em; and maybe this last was one reason why they never talked no more'n they did — they never said a word that wasn't plumb necessary, under no sarcumstances! I've never forgot the first conversation I ever heerd pass atween 'em—and I've heerd the same conversation a good many times sence then. Nancy she was a-standin' in the cabin door, and her pap he was a-hoein' corn on the mountainside above.

"Pap!"

"What?"

"Dinner!"

"Comin'."

That's a pretty good sample o' their way o' talkin'—when they talked at all.

Ashby he was the oldest and biggest of the boys—a big, still man with deep brown eyes and a young and silky black beard, a beard which no razor hadn't never touched onct.

Ashby he walked off one day without a-sayin' a word about whar he was a-goin'. He was gone a week, and when he come home it was to git his clo'es. He walks in, smiles a little all around, goes up in the loft and comes back with a bundle, a banjo, and a couple o' hands o' tobacker. He picks up his rifle from whar he'd set it aside o' the door, and turns to his folks.

"Good-by," he says. "Good luck."

"Whar you a-goin'?" axes Old Grandpap, a-lookin' hard over his spec's.

"Nawth Ca'liner. I'm married. Blue-eyed woman."

Ashby turns a little red but his beard hides the most of it.

"We're a-goin' to Vi'ginia to live."

"Come back, Ashby, when you can," says Old Grandpap, a-takin' off his spec's and a-wipin' at his eyes with a big blue handkercher. "Latchstring's always on the outside for you and yores. Good luck!"

"Good luck!" says Nancy, Dave and Spivy, as their brother turns away from the old home cabin.

Ashby went a-past the place whar his mother was a-sleepin' the last, long sleep among the laurels, and stopped thar for one still minute. Then he went; but he left the print of his knees on the ground aside o' the honeysuckle that kivered the

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slate-rock that sarved as a tombstone. The rest o' the silent Torreys seen the prints afterward, understood, and loved Ashby more'n they'd ever loved him afore.

ASHBY was gone seven years. At the end o' that time, late in the afternoon of a fine Summer day, he come a-walkin' up to the top o' the mountain above White Rock Cove; and he was a-leadin' a freckled, chubby six-year-old boy by the hand—a boy who had his mother's blue eyes. The two stopped under a tall pine. Ashby stood thar a-lookin' down at the old home cabin with his heart full o' fear, for he knowed his pap had been a' old man seven years afore. Then Ashby he sort o' pulled his jerky self together; he p'inted one lean, sunburned finger toward the house of logs that had seen his birth.

"That's it," he says to the boy at his side.

"Thar?" says the little feller, also a-p'intin'. "Grampaw he lives down thar? He's a good grampaw, hain't he, pap? Say, pap! He'll be glad to see me and you, won't he, pap? Say, pap! D'ye reckon he knows we're a-comin'? Say! Hain't you hongry, pap? I am. Le's go down to grampaw's, pap. Come on."

The boy's mother had come from people who believed in usin' the powers o' speech the Almighty'd give 'em; and the boy he took after his mother in more ways 'sides in a-havin' blue eyes.

Ashby commenced a-leadin' his son down into the cove. He knowed every tree and every stone, and they all seemed to welcome him; and thar was a wetness in his eyes when he walked tired and weary-like up atween the two rows o' marigolds that led from the gate to the doorstep. He stopped at the door: he was afeared to go on, afeared that Old Grandpap wasn't thar no more. The boy he went on into the cabin, a-follerin' his cu'r'osity.

"Grampaw?" he says, a-lookin' toward the chimbley corner and a-wigglin' his bare toes.

"Heh?" comes a cracked old voice—and then Ashby he steps into the cabin.

"Pap!" says Ashby, as he catches sight of a stooped old man with puffectly white hair and beard, who is a-settin' with one hand on the crook of his cane and t'other ahind o' one ear.

"Ashby!" says Old Grandpap, a-gittin' to his feet and a-feelin' his way toward his son. "Ashby, I'm as blind as a bat; but I'd know yore voice anywhar. Catch my hand thar, Ashby; I cain't see a durned thing. Shake, son. And that thar little voice—who is it, Ashby?"

"My boy," says Ashby, chokin' like.

"Yore boy!" hollers the old man, a-seemin' to be powerful glad. "Bless the good Lord, Ashby, for that—I shore hoped it was yore boy. Help me set back down, Ashby, so's I can take that thar boy on my knee—Ashby, afore goodness, I was a-gittin' afeared I'd have to answer the call and never have no grandchildren! I talk more'n I used to, Ashby, as you've done seen, I reckon. It's the age and the blindness, Ashby. Now, that thar boy he can talk to me, cain't he; heh? Help me set down."

Ashby he led his pap to his chair. The old man took the freckled boy on one knee, and commenced a-feelin' over him with his palsied hands. Pretty soon he raises his white head and says—

"Ashby, whar's yore wife?"

"Dead," says Ashby.

"Dead!" repeats Old Grandpap, a-shakin' his head sorrerful. "Oh, and it's a' awful thing to lose a good woman! I—I lost one, Ashby, and I know what it is."

AS HE finished a-talkin', Nancy she come in from the spring-house, and on her heels was Dave and Spivy, who'd jest quit work a-peelin' tan-bark. These three swapped a few words o' greetin' with Ashby, and then the old man he told 'em about Ashby's great loss. All of 'em looked powerful glum, and a silence settled down over 'em.

And then the boy he bu'sted out in a string o' talkin' that made 'em all smile in spite o' theirselves:

"Pap he lets me shoot his rifle, grampaw. I like to shoot a rifle. But I hain't big enough to go a-huntin' yit. When I'm big enough to hold a rifle out, every time you hear me shoot thar'll be a squirrel hit the ground — thumpety-thump! Thataway, grampaw. Thar's lots o' revenuers in Vi'ginia, grampaw. Jim Ike Bransford he shot one o' the lowdown things. Jim Ike he was a fine-lookin' feller. He wore red neckties all the time."

When the boy had got out o' breath, Dave he reached over and punched Ashby in the side.

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"What's his name?" Dave axes Ashby.

"Ain't got none," answers Ashby. "Always called him 'Baby'."

"I'll name him," smiles Spivy. "His name's 'Sputter'."

And so they called the boy Sputter. And it wasn't long until every single one of 'em got to lovin' that thar tow-headed and freckled-faced boy so much that they was plumb foolish about him.

'Specially Old Grandpap Torrey. Old Grandpap, as he had said, talked more'n he used to talk, and Sputter he shore could entertain the old feller. They got to be as thick as beans. The old man he'd take Sputter on his knee every chancet he could git, and tell him tales out o' the Bible, like Dan'l in the den o' lions, and the three men —Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego— who went into the fiery furnace. In fact Old Grandpap he was so tied up in the little feller that when Sputter had to go out after wood or anything he'd set with one hand ahind o' his ear and listen for bare feet on the cabin floor. Sputter he had a sort o' peculiar walk, anyhow: he'd stubbed his right big toe so much that he walked on his right heel through force o' habit.

Well, Ashby he was heartbroke over a losin' his wife. He got reckless, and pretty soon he was a makin' moonshine whisky on a little still he'd bought acrost the State line. Then a revenuer happened along to bu'st up Ashby's little still, and Ashby, him and the officer they had a fight that has went down in mountain hist'ry.

But the revenuer—he was the Chief, and his name was Thornton Forde—fin'lly succeeded in a gittin' the irons on Ashby, and took him to town at the p'int of a pistol. When the mountaineer was turned over to the jailer, he raised his hands and brought the irons down on the jailer's head so hard that he come mighty nigh a-havin' a mu'der case ag'inst him.

As it was, Ashby Torrey got six years in prison.

SIX years is a long time to a mountain-man when he has to spend 'em ahind o' bars. It's almost a lifetime. Ashby he spent them years in silence, never a-talkin' unless he jest had to. No words o' mine can tell about his longin' for his own blue mountains and the blue-eyed boy who lived back thar among 'em. And durin' his imprisonment, silver streaks had come to Ashby's fine hair and beard, and his health had went. It's always thataway with the mountaineer when he goes to sarve a term ahind o' the bars. Nobody else feels it like the mountain-man.

Late in the afternoon of a Summer day, Ashby limped to the top o' the mountain above White Rock Cove. His cheeks was holler, and his eyes was sunk back pitiful like; he walked on a cane, and he coughed bad. He stood under the pine he'd stopped under when he'd come home from Vi'ginia and brought Sputter with him—and some o' his thoughts was about the same as them he'd had that other day when he'd halted under the same pine tree.

Fin'lly he limped down into the cove, a goin' slow and a-dependin' a good deal on his cane.

Everything seemed jest the same as it had been when he'd left thar six years afore. The grapevines and gourdvines, the marigolds and honeysuckles, all didn't 'pear to be any older, nor did the cabin itself. Only him, it seemed, had aged. A-feelin' his weakness powerful keen, he hobbled acrost the doorstep and commenced a-lookin' for his pap. Then he seen the pore old feller, thin and feeble and a-trimblin', a settin' in his place in the chimbley corner—and he had one hand ahind o' one ear a-listenin'.

"Ashby," Old Grandpap says, "is that you?"

"Yes, pap, it's me," says Ashby, in his holler voice. He goes to his pap and sinks to the floor aside o' his chair, all broke to pieces. The old man he commences a-pattin' his sick son on the head and a-mumblin' into his snow-white beard.

Then Nancy she come a-runnin' into the room. She got down on her knees afore Ashby, and kissed him on the fore'ead; then she got up and went to the door, from whar she could almost see Dave and Spivy and Sputter a-workin' in the newground.

"Ashby's here!" she cries.

"Comin'," says three voices from the newground.

Dave and Spivy hurried down to the house—two big, still men with bearded faces and deep, earnest eyes; and jest ahind of 'em follered a twelve-year-old boy who was blue-eyed and big for his age. When they got inside o' the cabin, Ashby he went to his feet, with his arms held out toward the boy.

"Sputter," says Nancy, "that's yore pap."

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"Sputter," says Ashby, "you shorely hain't forgot me!"

Sputter he drawed back like he was afeard. He didn't remember his own pap—but you cain't blame him much, for six years was half of his life. He commenced a wigglin' his bare toes, and turned a little red.

"Little boy!" begins Ashby, and breaks off.

Thar was a powerful soul appeal in Ashby's holler eyes. Sputter might not 'a' understood it, but he shore felt it. He walked shy like toward Ashby, and Ashby took him in his arms and kissed him on the fore'ead.

"Louviny's eyes," mumbles Ashby. "Louviny's eyes. Sputter, you've shore got her eyes. Sputter, don't you remember me?"

Sputter smiled and shook his head.

"Tell him how good you can shoot, Sputter," says Dave.

THIS brought speech to the boy's ready tongue. Shootin' was his main braggin' p'int. Through the teachin' o' Dave and Spivy, Sputter had got to be a mighty good shot with a rifle.

"I—I shore can shoot, pap," says he. "You jest bet I can. Unc' Spivy, gi' me that thar rifle out o' the corner thar, and I'll show pap what I can do. Say, pap, I bet I can beat you!"

"Maybe," smiles Ashby.

And then Sputter he seemed to see for the first time that his pap was sick. He stood off a few feet from Ashby, and looked him up and down.

"Was they mean to you at the prison, pap? Yes! I bet they made you work like a dog thar. Who took you, pap? Unc' Dave and Unc' Spivy and Aunt Nan and grampaw they don't talk much about it."

"Thornton Forde," says Ashby, bitter like.

"Thornton Forde!" repeats the boy. His eyes got thoughtful. "I've heerd that name afore, shorely. Yes, I shore have. Pap, I could kill Thornton Forde!" He was a-standin' as straight as a young pine, and his face was white with hate.

"Sputter! Sputter!" cries the old man. For at his age human hates ain't so strong.

"I could kill Thornton Forde!" Sputter says ag'in.

Ashby he started to say somethin' to hush the boy up; but he didn't, acause Sputter was a takin' up for him ag'inst the man who had caught him for the six years in prison. He shet his jaws together tight, and watched Sputter's face with a good deal o' admiration in his eyes.

Nancy's voice comes from the next room:

"Dave!"

"What?"

"Supper!"

"Comin'."

The silent Torreys all went into the next room and set down to eat together oncet more.

DAYBREAK comes mighty soon in the Summertime—which hain't much news, I reckon. After a night o' coughin', Ashby he'd got up with the first streaks o' the dawn, dressed hisself, took up his cane, and walked out into the fresh, sweet air. Then he turned his footsteps toward the top o' the mountain, a-dependin' a good deal on his cane; he wanted to be whar he could see over the blue mountains he'd missed for so long.

When he got to the top, the upper part o' the red sun was jest a-peepin' above the neighbor mountain to the east. Thar was a gentle breeze, which brought the scent o' pine with it; a gray-squirrel was a-chatterin' clost by, and a pair o' yallerhammers in a tree out to his right was a-fussin' for all they was wo'th. So, thought Ashby, he'd been cheated out o' six years o' sech life as that! And he'd soon be called to leave it. It made him as bitter as death toward the man who had caught him a-'stillin' and arrested him. The words o' the blue-eyed boy come back to him plain—

"I could kill him!"

Ashby he turned his eyes toward town, which laid in sight under a cloud of its own smoke a good many miles to the west. He stood thar and stared at the piles o' houses for a long time, a-thinkin' and a-hatin' Thornton Forde.

Then thar come a voice from ahind o' Ashby: "Hello thar, pap!"

The sick man turns to see Sputter, who was a-walkin' up on all o' one foot and half o' t'other; and Ashby he seen that Sputter carried a rifle in his hands.

"I thought I'd hunt you up, pap," says the boy, "and show you how good I can shoot. See that thar squirrel in the top o' that thar chestnut tree thar, pap?"

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"Yes," says Ashby, with a very faint smile.

"Watch it," says Sputter. He raises his rifle, which was a smallbore gun, and takes a quick aim. At the crack o' the rifle a little gray body comes a-tumblin'—and thar was a bullet hole through the middle of its head.

"It takes a blamed pore marksman to shoot a squirrel in its body, pap," smiles Sputter, a-holdin' the little gray animile out so's Ashby he could see whar it had been shot at.

But Ashby wasn't a-lookin' at the squirrel. His holler eyes was a-s'archin' the face o' the boy afore him. And he seemed to be satisfied with what he seen thar. He takes Sputter by the shoulders.

"SON," says he, "last night I tried to git Dave and Spivy to bring a hoss from some'eres for me to ride to town, so's I could kill Thornton Forde—I'm so weak I couldn't walk it: I never would 'a' got here yeste'day if I hadn't 'a' rode in a wagon two-thirds o' the way. Dave and Spivy wouldn't do it. I tried to git 'em to go down and fix Forde theirselves; but they wouldn't do that. I'd 'a' tried to git him when I come through town on my way home; but I was too crazy to see you, Sputter, to stop. Sputter, look what I am after six years in prison—a walkin' corpse! And Thornton Forde he's got to die, and you've got to kill him!"

"By gyar, I can do it," says Sputter, his freckles a-standin' out ashy ag'inst the paleness of his face.

Ashby's thin breast commenced a risin' and a-fallin' fast. He was a-fightin' a battle in his heart thar on the top o' the mountain. But in the end he couldn't sacrifice his son, Louviny's boy, even for the sake o' satisfyin' his hate, great and bitter as it was.

"No, Sputter," he says, "you mustn't."

The butt o' Sputter's little rifle fell hard to the ground.

"Why mustn't I, pap?" says he. "Do you think I'm afeared o' the job? By gyar, pap, I hain't skeered o' nothin' in this world. I can fix Thornton Forde jest like I done that thar squirrel thar."

He caught up his rifle, and pumped the lever so hard that the empty ca'tridge flew twenty feet. He started off down the mountain toward town. Ashby stretched out his lean arms, and hollered mighty pitiful like—

"Come back here, Sputter!"

But Sputter he didn't pay no 'tention to it. He hurried on down through the laurels, and soon was out o' sight.

Ashby felt too weak to foller him. He looked in the direction o' the still shakin' laurels for a full minute; then he commenced a-limpin' down into the cove.

As he hobbled acrost the doorstep, his eyes fell on Old Grandpap, who was a-settin' in his place in the chimbley corner Old Grandpap had one hand ahind o' one ear, a listenin' for the uneven step of a barefoot boy.

"Ashby," says he, "is that you?"

"Yes," says Ashby.

"Whar's Sputter?" axes the old man. "I wanted to tell him the tale about Dan'l in the den o' lions."

"Sputter he went out to look for a squirrel," says Nancy, from the door that led to the next room. "I heerd him shoot a few minutes ago. We'll have game for dinner."

"Yes," says Ashby, "Sputter he's went a-huntin'." He gits ready to tell one o' the few lies of his life: "Sputter he said he was a goin' over in the Slaty Creek section, and he didn't know jest when he'd be back."

"Well, the Lord knows I'll miss him," groans Old Grandpap; and Ashby he turns his face away from his sister.

THE town Thornton Forde lived in was built scatterin' and full o' old maple shade trees; and it was lazy and easy goin'. I've heerd tell that the street kyar men would sometimes stop their kyars in the outskyrts o' the place to go a frog huntin'! A narrer, deep river flowed past the town; and the road that little Sputter traveled on his way to revenge j'ined this stream and went with it a mile afore a losin' itself in a wide and shady street.

It was about two hours by sun when the boy, with his rifle acrost his shoulder, come in sight o' the river. His freckled face was dusty and streaked with sweat; his cheeks was a little holler and a little pale; his right big toe was a-bleedin' through a rag he'd tore offen a patch on his knee to tie it up with. And Sputter he'd already begun to look out for a big man with brown hair and a curved skyar on his jaw.

As Sputter, a-walkin' on his whole left foot and half of his right, come to the stream, he seen a tall, gray and bearded man a-standin' on the bank and a throwin' flowers into the water. Sputter he stopped

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from natchel cur'osity. The gray man turned, nodded sad like, and spoke:

"Son, you're tired and wore. Whar did you come from?"

"Mountains," says Sputter, a wantin' to be as much like the silent Torreys as he could.

"And whar, if I may inquire, are you a-goin', son?"

"Nowhar," snaps Sputter.

"And you're hongry, son," says the gray man, with a good little smile. "I wisht you'd let me take you to my house and give you somethin' to eat." He walks closter to the boy. "Will you?"

"No," says Sputter.

"Why?"

" 'Cause."

The gray man throws out his hands helpless and sad like.

"My boy," says he, "I didn't mean to do any harm when I axed you to go along with me and have somethin' to eat. I like boys so very much. It's acause I had a little boy oncet. He was drownded in the river here. I was a-throwin' them flowers on his grave. It come mighty nigh a-killin' me, son. He was all I had. . . My good wife she went at his birth. . . Little boy, won't you go home with me, and have supper with me?"

"Whar does Thornton Forde live at?" axes Sputter, not a-payin' no 'tention to the gray man's question. For Sputter's whole heart was centered on a-findin' a big man with brown hair and a skyar on his jaw.

"Thornton Forde—the revenue officer?" smiles the gray man. "He lives clost to whar I live at. Come with me, and I'll show you."

TOGETHER they walked up the road, alongside o' the river, a-goin' slow and not a talkin' none ag'inst the quiet o' the evenin'. The scent o' honeysuckle and wild roses come on the gentle breeze; mockin' birds sung soft like in the trees overhead; the low tinkle of cowbells come from the meadows. And when they had reached a big and lonesome brick house a settin' among old and knotty maples, the gray man stopped and put a hand on the boy's arm.

"Son, I do wisht you'd come in and eat with me," he says, powerful pitiful. "I'm so lonesome here without my little boy. And after we've eat," he says, "I'll hunt up Thornton Forde for you. Won't you come in with me, son?"

Sputter 'lowed hisself to be led in at the gate. The grass was high in the yard, so high that it almost smothered out the roses; honeysuckle vines, matted and tangled, almost shet in the big front porch; a pizen-vine mighty nigh kivered one o' the front windows. The gray man led his little visitor straight into a sunny dinin'-room, which was old-fashioned but which was mighty neat. Sputter he set his loaded rifle down in one corner, hung his faded felt hat on the bar'l, and took a chair that had been pulled out for him.

Then a' old black woman commenced a-bringin' things to eat in from the kitchen. The gray man he sets down acrost the table, smiles at Sputter, and says:

"Now ax for anything that you see which you happen to want," he says. "I know you're hongry. Now own up, hain't you?"

"Yes," says Sputter, short like, as become one o' the silent Torreys.

After the boy had eat a hearty supper, and had wiped his mouth on one o' his coat sleeves, the gray man he puts his elbows on the white tablecloth, laces his fingers together under his p'inted beard, and begins to look thoughtful.

"Son," he fin'lly says, "you're one o' them silent Torreys. I knowed it as soon as I'd heerd you talk. They're all like that: never say a word that they don't have to say. You're the son of Ashby Torrey, who has jest finished a-doin' six years in prison. Son, Ashby Torrey didn't go to prison acause Thornton Forde wanted him to go: he went thar acause he'd vi'lated the laws o' the United States. You come to town to kill Thornton Forde, son; but you cain't do it now, for no mountaineer will kill a man when he's jest broke that man's bread. Son, I'm Thornton Forde!"

Sputter goes white and gits to his feet, with his blue eyes wide and full o' fire.

AFTER the two had eyed each other for a few seconds, Forde went on—but his voice sounded different from what it had sounded afore:

"But I don't know that it's wo'th while to try to git you out o' the notion o' takin' my life. And then I cain't say that I want to live. Son, I've turned gray in six little years. So if you want to, take yore rifle thar and end my mis'ry. Under the sar-

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cumstances, I don't think you'll be held accountable for a-doin' it."

Sputter he shoves his chair out o' the way, and walks backward slow like until he gits to his rifle. He throws his hat to the floor, takes up the gun and pulls the hammer back; then he levels the bar'l straight for the heart o' Thornton Forde, and his forefinger, as stiddy as any man's ever was, feels easy like for the hairfine trigger.

But somethin' in Forde's sufferin' eyes stopped the brown finger jest as it was about to touch the little curved piece o' blued steel. After all, Sputter was about to fail in his great purpose. The rifle's muzzle fell a foot.

"Are you afeared, son?" axes Forde's quiet, even voice.

"No!" cries the boy; and the rifle's muzzle comes up ag'in.

"Then shoot," says Thornton Forde. "Shoot. I think I'd ruther j'ine the boy who was lost in the river than to live on through the desolate days and the black and sleepless nights. Shoot, son, shoot if you want to."

"Not if it's to 'commodate *you*," says Sputter. His rifle's butt finds a place on the kyarpet, clost to his bleedin' toe.

Thornton Forde goes to his feet. He puts his hands on the table and leans forward. He was at the gate of death and freedom from his long worry, and he shore wanted to enter.

"You're the only one o' the silent Torreys that I've ever seen who didn't have no nerve," he says.

"No nerve!" repeats Sputter. He raises his rifle ag'in, and his right eye follers the sights and on to a place on Thornton Forde's breast. "I'll show you about that!"

Jest as he was about to touch the hairfine trigger a long arm shot itself over his shoulder from ahind of him, and a big and knotty hand caught the gun and jerked it up and out of his grip. He turned and seen the bearded face o' Dave Torrey, who had slipped into the house by way o' the open doors. And Dave Torrey's face was as pale as Thornton Forde's.

"Sputter," says Dave, "you go out on the porch and wait thar for me. I've got to have a talk with this here man."

Sputter he was used to mindin' what Dave said. Sputter went to the front porch.

Dave he set the little rifle ag'inst the wall, and then he went up to Thornton Forde.

"A man who could see you suffer like you're a doin'—and like you've been a-sufferin' for six years," Dave says, "hain't got the heart of a' owl in him. Thornton, us Torreys has all been a little blind, I'll own up; but we're mountain people, and we're different from anybody else on earth. Now, I'm a-goin' to tell you somethin' that'll mighty nigh knock you down; and after that I'm a goin' to ax a favor of you.

"When Ashby was took off to prison, he left a blue-eyed boy, the only child him and his wife had had, Thornton. Ashby's wife had died, and the boy was more precious to Ashby than the welfare of his immortal soul. The boy's name was Sputter. When Ashby had been gone three weeks, Sputter died. Then me and my brother Spivy we come to town here and kidnaped yore boy, and left his clo'es on the river bank to make you think he'd been drownded. The boy who was about to revenge Ashby Torrey, Thornton, was yore own son!"

Forde he starts for the front porch. But Dave Torrey stops him.

"Hold on thar," he says. "I've yit got to ax the favor. I want you to let me take the boy back to Ashby. I want you to let him stay with Ashby until he—— Thornton, Ashby he cain't last long, and I want him to have the comfort o' thinkin' Sputter is his own flesh and blood durin' his last days. And then thar's pore old pap, who's as blind as a log; he likes the boy so much, and it would hurt him bad to have to part with Sputter now. Neither one, Ashby nor pap, won't be with us long; and when they've j'ined the others, we—we'll bring little Sputter—back to you——"

He broke down at the end of the longest speech he'd ever made. Thornton Forde took his knotty right hand and pressed it hard.

AT SUNDOWN the next day, Dave and Sputter they reached the top o' the mountain above White Rock Cove, whar they met Ashby under the tall pine. Pore Ashby got down on his knees and took the blue-eyed boy's head on his shoulder, and patted his little back lovin' like.

From the door o' the cabin in the cove below come the voice o' Nancy:

"Dave!"

"What?"

"Supper!"

"Comin'."

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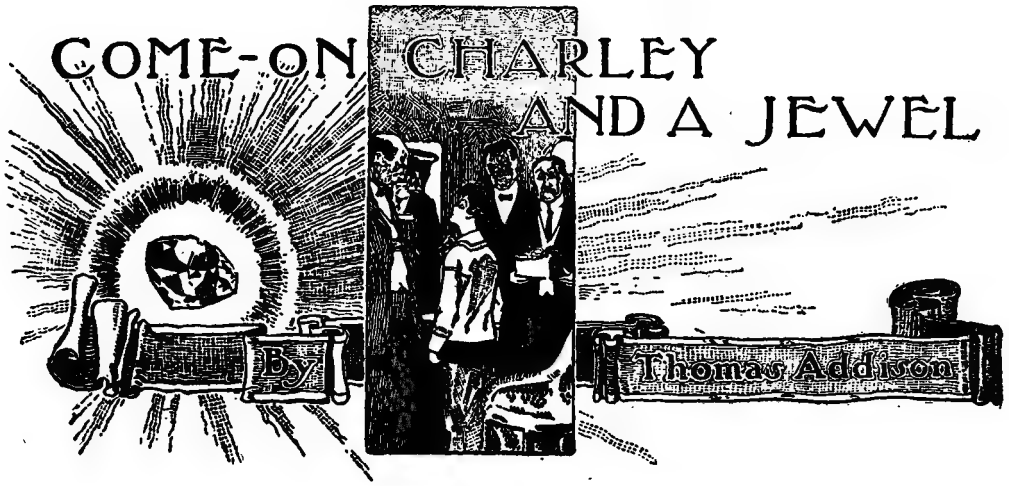
COME-ON CHARLEY AND A JEWEL



EVERYBODY in New York knows Mouchard's. You pay more for a lobster there than in any place on earth; and that is what its reputation is built on.

Mr. Samuel Drew, attorney at law, dwelt upon this and similar thoughts as he sat in a snug corner of the famous restaurant before his *fricandeau écrevisse* and pint of Roman e Conti. He had passed the evening at a much advertised play and was recompensing himself for three wasted hours; he could see a better drama of the kind any day at the police court, in less time and at no expense.

"Put up a big enough bluff in this town and stand to it," he murmured to his wine, gently swaying it to and fro under his nose to catch the bouquet, "and they'll tumble over themselves to help you make it good. Nerve is all you need—nerve!"

Curiously enough, Mr. Drew instantly discovered that he himself was lacking in this prime essential. He set down his glass abruptly and his jolly round face betrayed confusion; for, coming straight toward him, though they had not yet caught sight of him, were Mr. Charles Arthur Carter and his secretary, Mr. Percival Teeters, known to Broadway as Merciful Skeeters.

Mr. Drew had not seen the twain—he had taken care not to—since the memorable day in Hamilton when he made Charley offhand a millionaire by repute. Several times he had thought to put a period to his prank, but he had come to the pass where he did not know just exactly how to do it. Unpleasant publicity and a damaging reflection on his standing at the bar might follow, and this was a thing to be avoided; so he decided to let the matter rock along until a conclusion was forced on him, when he would get out of his predicament as best he could. Practical jokes, the learned brother had ascertained, are like certain rules—they work both ways.

It was Mr. Teeters' vagrant eye which spied the lawyer. He came to a full point, like a lean, scraggy dog, and he halted Mr. Carter also. "Say, Come-On," he whispered behind his hand, "if I ain't seeing things, there's Drew!"

"Where?" questioned Charley.

"Over there by the window—straight ahead." Charley looked; and Mr. Drew, perceiving that he was run to earth, put on a bold front and waved a napkin at them.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed when they stood before him. "I was just thinking of you boys. How are you, Mr. Carter; and you, Mr. Skee-Teeters?"

"Bully," said Charley. "How are you?"

"Fine, fine!" returned the lawyer. "Heard you called at the office. Sorry I was away. Er—out of town, you know. Sit down and have a bite with me. I can recommend this lobster cutlet."

"Thanks," said Charley. "Expect a friend. Supper with him. But glad to wait till he comes."

They took seats. Mr. Drew, who had just broached his bottle, called for glasses and insisted that they drink with him. It was a still, red burgundy, really old, but to Mr.

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Teeters it was simply—if we may use the word—slops. Wine to him meant hiss and bubbles, and if it met these requirements it might be vinted on the sunny slopes of Hoboken for all he knew or cared. As for Charley one wine was as good as another—and none of it enticing.

Mr. Drew, then, poured pearls on Philistine palates, but in the process he recovered his poise. His joke began to seem good to him again as he gazed on the serious visage of Come-On Charley, and from that to the pale-eyed complacency of his attendant squire.

"Came to see me at the office about your fortune, I suppose; eh?" he said jovially.

Charley looked at him; and there was the shadow of a smile on his lips—too faint, perhaps, for Mr. Drew to note. "No," he replied. "Friendly call. Shake hands. That's all."

The portly advocate raised his brows.

"The deuce! 'Pon my soul, I'm sorry I missed you. So the exchequer isn't running dry, eh?"

"No," said Charley.

"Good! Because you know the—er—conditions of your uncle's will; you have to make your starter grow first. You have to earn your two millions, as one might say; eh?"

"Sure," said Charley soberly.

"Excellent!" praised the other. "Excellent! And what, if I may ask, does your balance stand at now?"

"Thirty thousand," answered Charley.

Mr. Drew was about to introduce into his mouth a choice morsel from his plate; but at this intelligence he held it suspended midway and gaped at the young man.

"Are you speaking in cents or dollars?" he demanded. His tone was sharp.

"Oh, just dollars," chirped up Mr. Teeters for his chief. "Just the little bully boys all in a row." He gave a crackling laugh and airily fingered his mustache.

"Easy Street," remarked Charley cheerfully.

The lawyer completed the gastronomic circuit and chewed his lobster with a puzzled frown.

"Lord! Lord!" he muttered to himself. "I'm a wizard and never suspected it." He laid aside his fork and addressed Mr. Carter. "Tell me how it happened," he requested. "I'm in fairly rugged health and can stand a good deal, but this is something of a shock. Tell it quick!"

Charley tranquilly responded. His speech was neither hurried nor delayed. He recited the sad story of misplaced confidence wherein he, instead of the radium tricksters, had pocketed fifteen thousand dollars; and he told it in sixty seconds and as many words. It would have made a "pony" press-dispatch writer sick abed with envy.

Mr. Drew viewed the boy with a feeling almost approaching affection—the sort of feeling one has for the work of his hands.

"So," he observed, "in less than six weeks you have made ten thousand dollars grow to thirty—trebled it!"

"Luck," said Charley.

"Um. Perhaps," grunted the lawyer. "Does it occur to you, my young friend, that if you can keep the gait you've struck you'll have your two million in short order?"

This appeared to cause Charley some perplexity.

"Which two millions?" he inquired.

Mr. Drew sought refuge in his wine. He was of a mind to make a clean breast of it then and there. But as he took in the boy's serious face over the rim of his glass he balked at the task.

"Confound it, sir," he sputtered, "decide the question for yourself! If you can earn two millions so much the better; if you can't, why—er—so much the worse. When did you say this thing happened?"

"Tuesday," Mr. Carter told him.

"And this is Thursday. There's been nothing in the papers about it, like that Bannerstein business."

"I guess not!" put in Mr. Teeters. "We're laying low for another piece of pie. When they ring the bell we'll be right there with the mazuma in our hand. Oh, I guess yes! Hey, Come-On? We got a new graft—robbing robbers."

"Sure," said Charley. He winked slowly at Mr. Drew and crossed his fingers. "Wise owl—Skeeters."

"Leave it to me!" cried the secretary, elated at this praise. "I can tell a con man now the length of Brooklyn Bridge. They can't fool me! I can tell 'em," he bragged in a burst of self-laudation, "with my head in a bag and somebody tickling my toes. It's easy as falling downstairs."

"Very likely," said Mr. Drew dryly, though his vest buttons joggled a little in a

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way they had when he was secretly amused. "If robbing robbers is your specialty, Mr. Skeeters, you want to keep a lookout for Brahma's Eye, the great Oriental ruby that has been stolen."

Mr. Teeters was mystified.

"Whose eye?" he queried.

"Haven't you read about it?" the lawyer asked him. "The papers have been full of it. How about you, Charley?"

"Only read the sporting page," confessed Charley frankly. "Keeps me busy."

"Say! Brahma's the name of a chicken!" suddenly ejaculated Mr. Teeters, who had received light from within. "What's a ruby got to do with it?"

Mr. Drew's vest buttons joggled again.

"BRAHMA is the Hindu deity," he explained with studied gravity. "The ruby was named for the great flaming eye of the god. Those Orientals have a passion for that sort of thing, you know. It's a wonderful stone, the most wonderful ruby in the world—pure pigeon-blood in color, big as a walnut and without a flaw. Morton Butler—you've heard of him; the railroad king—bought it of an Indian prince for a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. And they stole it from him in Paris!"

"Who did it?" It was Charley who put the question.

The lawyer laughed.

"That's what Morton Butler would like to know. He has offered twenty-five thousand dollars for the return of the stone, and ten thousand dollars for the arrest of the thieves."

"Wow!" said Mr. Carter humorously.

"Oh, Butler's mad clear through," continued the attorney, "for that ruby would have made his collection complete. The thieves, I suppose, will hold out for a bigger reward. They know Butler. Everybody does. What he wants he wants, no matter what the cost."

"And he wants that ruby!" suggested Charley with a grin.

Mr. Drew's reply, if inelegant, was expressive.

"Like a cow her calf! I dare say Butler would pay the price of the stone over again if he had to. The gang is trading on the old man's weakness; they'll raise the limit to the roof and wait for him to come across. That's the way I figure it."

"Huh! I guess we ain't in on this, Come-On," grumbled Mr. Teeters. "Paris ain't around the corner."

"But they may bring it over here," encouraged Mr. Drew. "They'll want to keep close to Butler, ready to snap him up quick when he shows the white flag. It is thought they are Americans—the crooks—and they are watching the boats. Uncle Sam is interested because there's a twenty-per-cent. duty involved, and besides, old Butler has a pull in Washington. Shouldn't be surprised if the Secret Service is at work on the case. Hullo! Isn't this your friend?"

A man of middle age and prosperous appearance, with a hint of the military in his bearing, had come up and was smilingly trying to attract Charley's attention.

"Major Norris!" exclaimed Mr. Teeters.

He arose hastily and shook hands with the newcomer. Charley leaned over and whispered to Mr. Drew:

"Good old sport. Stopping at the Rirebien. Want to know him?"

"No," said the lawyer. "Go along. I'm leaving."

Charley got up.

"My dear fellow," said Major Norris to Charley, "pray accept my apologies. I was detained. But I have a table reserved, and if this gentleman will permit us——"

He made a courteous gesture, and paused. His voice was deep and resonant, and Mr. Drew rather fancied the man. He bowed them away, and as he went out, a few moments later, bowed to them again at their table in the far side of the room.

"Jolly sort of chap that, I should say," offered Major Norris tentatively. "Actor?"

Charley grinned at him.

"By George! That's good!" he declared.

"He's Come-On's lawyer," spoke up Mr. Teeters. "Samuel Drew, Esquire." He said it importantly. To have a lawyer, he seemed to feel, was a claim to distinction. Others have felt the same—until the day of settlement.

"Ah, I see!" was the Major's simple comment on the information he had elicited; and he went on with his cassolette of lobster a shade thoughtfully.

"Ever hear, Major," inquired Charley, "about—— Whose eye was it, Skeeters? What chicken?"

"Brahma," Mr. Teeters prompted him.

"Sure," said Charley. "Brahma's Eye. Ever hear about it, sir?"

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The soldierly gentleman pushed his plate away and looked across the table at his questioner with friendly indulgence.

"My dear boy," he replied, "who hasn't? I imagine every paper in the world has printed something about that steal. Very cleverly done, too. No ordinary thieves."

"You bet!" applauded Mr. Teeters. "When you can hang a thing like that on a guy with a dough-bag big enough to choke the Jersey tunnel you've set your clock ahead a bit."

Major Norris nodded a laughing assent.

"Very smartly put, Mr. Teeters. It's not just plain stealing; it smacks of genius. It's Napoleonic, by Jove!"

"Gee!" said Charley. "I'd like to see that ruby."

"So would I," concurred the Major. He motioned to the waiter to remove the course, and when this was done he turned to his guests with a serious air. "Boys," he said, "I'm in rather an awkward fix. I wonder if you'll help me out?"

Charley's hand automatically sought his checkbook.

"Sure!" he responded. "How much?"

But Major Norris waved the book back to its hiding-place with a fleeting smile.

"My dear Carter, it's handsome of you, but it's not that kind of a fix," he stated. "It's to do with my daughter. I'm expecting her tomorrow, as you know, on the *Veronica* from London. I came over from Cincinnati to meet her, and now at the last minute a matter pops up that will prevent me. It's devilish annoying!"

The Major plucked at his gray imperial and frowned.

"Too bad," said Charley, with a ready sympathy, but with not so ready understanding. Mr. Teeters, though, grasped the situation.

"Wake up, Come-On!" he cried. "We got a part to play—meeting popper's only child. Hey, Major? Ain't that the stunt?"

He cackled and wiggled his mustache at the gentleman from Cincinnati, who took it in excellent part.

"If you will be so kind," he said, his brow clearing. "I was reluctant to ask it, but I have no friends here except yourselves who—to be quite frank about it—I would care to have Madeleine meet. I'm a little particular in these things."

Mr. Teeters twirled his mustache and ran over in his mind his list of jaunty neckties.

"Can't be too careful," he observed complacently.

"Assuredly so," agreed Madeleine's father. "The matter stands like this: The *Veronica* is due to dock at ten o'clock. It is exactly at that hour my engagement is made for tomorrow, and it's too vitally important to be deferred. In brief, the man is leaving town and I've simply got to see him."

"Glad to meet the lady," Charley told the Major gravely. "But—" his eyes were puzzled—"how are we going to know her?"

Major Norris laughed lightly. He took from his pocket a photograph of calling-card size and laid it before the two.

"This will help you," he remarked. "I'm rather vain of that girl, boys."

Mr. Carter and Mr. Teeters gazed at the picture. It bore the imprint of a famous Parisian photographer, and was a splendid example of his art.

"Say! By George! She's a stunner!" There was a little catch in Charley's voice.

"She has blue eyes and black hair," mentioned Major Norris, "and she's a tiny trick—doesn't weigh over a hundred and ten." He beamed with parental pride. "Think you'll know her?"

"In a million!" affirmed Mr. Teeters. "But how'll she know us, hey? She may take us for a couple of Jump-Johnnies and call a cop."

"I've got it!" sung out Charley in a flash of inspiration. "Wireless! Give our names. Look for white rose in coats. No mistake then. Everything O. K."

Major Norris leaned back and looked his admiration at this luminous suggestion.

"Why, to be sure!" he acclaimed. "The simplest thing in the world—and I never thought of it! Hang it all, gentlemen, I must be getting old! Waiter, bring on the Pink Seal, and don't forget to chill the glasses."

II

MR. CARTER and his secretary rolled up in a big yellow car to the steamer's pier at a quarter of ten. A bridal rose, full-blown with beauty, clung to each coat and made of them marked men; they were as conspicuous as spots on the sun. To their consternation they found that the *Veronica* had been warped into her berth some time before.

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"Maybe she's gone—gave us up for a yoke of caterpillars hitched to a dray," croaked Mr. Teeters as they raced for the gangplank.

"By George!" exclaimed Charley in dismay.

But standing by the rail as they went aboard was a young woman whose face lighted up when she beheld them.

"To see Miss Norris?" she questioned with subdued eagerness. "I'm her maid; come this way, please."

They followed the maid to a reception-room forward of the main saloon, where she drew back and motioned them to enter. In a corner of the room a beautiful girl, small and slender, with black hair and blue eyes, was seated in a low wicker chair, saucily indifferent to the baleful glare of a big, burly old gentleman with a bulbous nose who stood menacingly over her.

Two special Treasury agents were ranged alongside of him. The girl was indolently picking at a five-pound box of candied fruits which lay in her lap, and had just selected with her tongs a tempting cherry when Messrs. Carter and Teeters walked in. She dropped the cherry and cried out in a glad voice—

"Charley!"

This utter absence of formality staggered yet delighted Mr. Carter and, it may be added, surprised him. How did she know him from Merciful Skeeters? He furnished the answer himself by stepping forward, a thing on which Miss Norris had, of course, quite naturally counted.

"Charley," she chattered on, without giving him a chance to speak, "do tell these horrid people that I am a perfectly proper person, and you've known me for ages. They've been frightfully disagreeable."

She stood up to welcome him, holding the box of confections awkwardly pressed to her breast, and with her free hand she drew him impetuously to her and kissed him on the cheek. Charley flushed a brick red.

"Help me!" she breathed in his ear. And then: "Oh, Mr. Teeters!" as that young man advanced, hoping for similar treatment. "How do you do? So pleased to see you!"

Mr. Teeters took the hand she extended, but there was no tension to it, no drawing in toward herself. He covered his disappointment gallantly, however, and said—

"Had a good trip, I hope; didn't lose the bill of fare."

"Well, well," growled the old gentleman with the bulbous nose, "we are getting nowhere with all this."

Charley looked at him belligerently. A kiss well bestowed has many a time bought a knight's allegiance. Consult your histories if you doubt this. So—

"What's the trouble?" Mr. Carter demanded coldly.

The old gentleman scowled at the customs men.

"Do you know this person, either of you?" He shot out the question irritably.

"Why, yes, sir," replied one of the officials. "I know him by sight—everybody does along Broadway. He is Mr. Charley Carter." He lowered his voice: "Worth a couple of million."

Charley took his turn at seeking information.

"Pleasant old party. Polite. Who is he?" he inquired of Miss Norris.

She smiled maliciously.

"Is it possible you don't know him, Charley? Good gracious! Why, it's Mr. Morton Butler. He owns everything in sight except, I am told, a ruby called Brahma's Eye. He seems to have lost that, and is quite put out about it—quite upset, really."

"Brahma's Eye!" echoed Charley. "By George! Hear that, Percy?"

Mr. Teeters whistled softly and wiggled his mustache. Morton Butler swooped around on the speaker.

"What do you know about it?" he snarled.

"Not a thing," Charley told him tranquilly. "Only heard of it last night. But what's the trouble here? Lady's my friend. So is her father—Major Norris."

Miss Norris laughed unrestrainedly.

"He thinks, Charley," she gurgled, "that I have his ruby! He's been watching me like a cat all the way over. Oh, I'd like to see papa's face when he hears of it! Mr. Teeters, do hold this for me." She thrust the box of crystallized fruits into his arms. "I want to find my handkerchief."

She found it and wiped away the tears of merriment from her violet eyes, letting herself fall into a seat as she did so. She looked so very young and little—so like a roguish miss just out of school—that it would have melted any heart but Morton Butler's. Charley's was like fluid wax.

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"Say, this won't do!" he expostulated to the scowling money-king, who was manifestly a prey to doubt.

"I'd be angry if it wasn't such a joke," giggled Miss Norris. "I have declared everything, and they've rummaged my trunks, and now——Charley, he wants me searched! And Agnes, my maid! Can you think of anything so ridiculous?"

"He's nuts!" jeered Mr. Teeters. "His ridgepole's out of plumb."

Charley's teeth clenched together. He was wishing this was not an old man before him. He would have liked to lay violent hands on him. Instead, he spoke to the agent who had recognized him.

"What's the law?" he asked.

"If Mr. Butler says so we've got to do it," the inspector answered. "A woman examiner, of course."

"He won't say it," tittered Miss Norris from behind her handkerchief. "He knows better. It would cost him something when papa got through with him. Oh, I wish he were here!"

The great man, who had been wrapped in thought heedless of these trivial remarks, seemed suddenly to arrive at a decision.

"I saw this young person in Paris several times," he stated harshly. "Her actions were suspicious, as I afterward recalled. When the ruby was stolen she disappeared, and it was only by accident that we took the same boat. If I'm wrong I'll pay for it—but I'll have her searched. Take her away!"

Miss Norris gasped and sprang to her feet. There was no laughter in her eyes now; they were flashing dangerously.

"It is a case of mistaken identity," she asseverated. "Be careful, sir!"

The man of many millions stared at her and grunted—simply that; and the girl stared back at him, as if doubting the reality of her position. Then she drew up her slight form to its utmost inch and threw out her hands in a gesture that, had she been born an actress, would not have better conveyed the sense of outraged womanhood.

"You really mean to do this thing—to put this insult on me?" she demanded, low-voiced and quivering.

For reply Morton Butler took a huge black cigar from his pocket and placed it between his teeth. This little act of courtesy performed, he motioned the Treasury sleuths toward the girl and turned to leave the room. Charley and Mr. Teeters looked on aghast. They felt powerless to cope with this situation, backed as it was by the majesty of the law. But not so Miss Norris.

"Stop!" she called out. "You are not absolute, old man, swollen though you are with the power of your money. I have rights that you are bound to respect—that these men must respect."

The railroad-magnate faced about and regarded her with plain distaste.

"Well?" He flung the word at her as he might have a penny to a beggar.

"I demand the protection of my father's presence," the girl retorted. "I refuse to budge until he comes. I shall make a scene if you try to use compulsion. I'll have all New York talking about you before night—laughing at the fool you've made of yourself! Charley—" she appealed passionately to the boy—"will you please go and bring my father to me?"

"Sure thing," rejoined Mr. Carter. "Guess the Major'll make him dance." He moved quickly to the door.

"Go with him, Mr. Teeters." The girl ran to the secretary and urged him on. "Tell my father he must drop everything and come. If it costs him millions he must do it. No! No!" she broke out petulantly as he would have returned the box of fruits to her. "Keep it for me. Get my father and bring him to me. Hurry! Hurry! I'll see if this old brute can treat me like a thief!"

She spun around on her heel, and as Charley and Mr. Teeters scurried off they saw her snapping her fingers under the bulbous nose of the startled plutocrat like a little fury egged on by a thousand devils.

Mr. Carter and Mr. Teeters hustled down the gangplank. As they stepped upon the dock a man stopped them.

"What you got there?" he queried, pointing to the box under Mr. Teeters' arm—he had come off without the lid, and the contents were plain to the naked eye.

"Doughnuts," said Mr. Teeters. "Have one?"

He held out the box. Miss Norris had tumbled the upper layers considerably with the tongs, and it looked sticky and rather messy. The customs man chuckled and slapped a chalk-mark on the box.

"Pass," he said, and they went on.

"Hotel, Billy. Hit her up. Push her,"

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Charley bade the driver when they reached their car.

And then a mischance happened, Charley's foot was on the running-board, when he held back and motioned Mr. Teeters to jump in first. The secretary started to obey. In some way his foot encountered Charley's, and he tripped and plunged head first into the tonneau. The sugared fruits were sprawled all over the floor-cloth. Mr. Teeters squealed in dismay and picked himself up with a rueful countenance.

"Gee!" ejaculated Charley. "That's a muss. Have to get another lot. Hop up in front, Skeeters. I'll chuck this stuff out as we go along."

He did. He left a trail of plums, pears, apricots and what not from Eighteenth Street to Twenty-third, when the supply ran out. Then he leaned back in the seat and gave himself over to reflection.

AT THE Rirebien they learned that Major Norris had not returned.

"Merry Moses!" vociferated Mr. Teeters. "What are we going to do, Come-On?"

"Got to wait," said Charley. "Chase around the corner. Leroy's. Get a box of candied fruit. Same size. I'll stick here."

Mr. Teeters dashed out. Charley crossed to the cigar-stand and bought a mild panatella. He exchanged a few pleasantries with the girl in charge, who had secret hopes of him, and then took a seat facing the door. As he did so he glanced at his watch. It was after eleven, and the Major's engagement was for ten. He ought to be back soon. He would, of course, be expecting to find his daughter waiting for him and would hurry.

Mr. Teeters presently came dashing in with a box under his arm neatly done up in white paper.

"Say, Come-On," he panted as he sat down and dandled the box on his knee, "this is fierce. That poor little girl will think we've lost a shoe."

"Too bad," said Charley absently, "but can't go back without the Major."

He was watching a man, spruce and business-like, who had just come in from the street and was sauntering around the lobby scrutinizing the occupants. He saw this person stop a passing bell-boy and speak to him, and saw the boy point in his direction; and then the man came over to him.

"Mr. Charley Carter?" he inquired briskly.

"Yes," Charley told him.

"My name is Jones," vouchsafed the other. "I'm from Major Norris. He won't be able to get here for an hour or more."

"Gollamighty!" burst out Mr. Teeters. "We got to see him. Got to take him to his daughter. They're fixing to run her through the hopper. Going to search her for Brahma's Eye. Outrage!"

Mr. Jones was singularly undisturbed at this announcement. He took it as a joke, apparently.

"No? You don't tell me," he laughed. "Think she's trying to smuggle in that stolen ruby? That's a good one!"

Charley blew a ring of smoke into the air.

"Great!" he said. "Nice old crab—Morton Butler."

Mr. Jones's attitude changed.

"Butler!" he exclaimed. "Did he come over with her? His name wasn't on the passenger-list."

"Kept it off," Charley stated. " 'Fraid it would sink the ship."

Mr. Jones frowned. Then he became confidential. He leaned over and said:

"It's all rot, you know, about that ruby. Monkey shines! But—" he winked shrewdly —"there might be a little matter of lace. You know how women are? I'll hurry back and tell Norris to hot-foot it down there and square things." He turned abruptly as if to go, and then reconsidered it. "By the way, the girl—Miss Norris—didn't send any special word by you—or anything?"

Mr. Teeters answered.

"Only some candied fruit, but——"

"There it is," cut in Charley, pointing to the package on Mr. Teeters' knee.

"Oh!" smiled Mr. Jones. "Candied fruit? Well, well!"

"Yes," went on Mr. Teeters. "But this box——"

Charley interrupted him again.

"She asked us to keep it for her."

"Quite so," said Mr. Jones affably, "but it's possible she won't come here to the Rirebien after all, and you've had bother enough. I'll take it to Norris; that's the best thing to do. He'll see you later."

"You're the doctor," agreed Charley carelessly.

Mr. Jones reached down and took possession of the box, nodding the while pleasantly at Mr. Teeters.

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"Wait!" entreated that gentleman. "Let me tell you something——"

But Mr. Jones waved a hand at him, and without further words made off.

Charley threw away his cigar and grinned at his companion.

"What's the difference, Skeet?" he remarked. "Plums is plums. Going up? Want to wash my hands. Sticky."

III

WHEN Charley came out from his dressing-room into his sitting-room he was sporting a purple tie, brand new; and a silk handkerchief to match peeped from his pocket. Mr. Teeters observed these innovations with astonishment. Mr. Carter was painfully plain in his dress, to the secretary's notion, who was given to startling effects in vesture. Even Broadway sat up when Mr. Teeters sallied forth to take the air.

"Say, Come-On, you're getting gay in your old age," he jested.

"Second childhood," replied Mr. Carter equably, and tucked in the handkerchief a trifle.

"Case of girl, you mean," Mr. Teeters cackled noisily and, the telephone ringing, got up and answered it. He turned from it wide agape. "She's downstairs in the parlor—Miss Norris," he reported.

"Alone?" queried Charley.

"They didn't say. Jerusalem crickets, but she made it quick!"

Charley looked in the glass between the windows, and tucked in another corner of his handkerchief.

"Let's go down," he said, and marched out.

Miss Madeleine Norris was alone, and she beamed on them as they walked into the little morning-room where she waited. This time she did not offer to kiss Mr. Carter.

"You didn't find papa, Charley, or you'd have come back," was her greeting. "Awfully sorry to have to put you to so much trouble."

"Nothing at all," Charley assured her. "How did you make out?"

"They searched me," Miss Norris told him. "I saw it was no use and got it over with. But I gave that horrid old man a talking-to he won't forget. The idea, thinking I had his old ruby!"

"Sure," said Charley. "Funny."

"Funny! I should say it was!"

And the young lady giggled delightedly.

"But they weren't even satisfied with that. Butler had me followed. It was so plain I had to laugh. And I gave them the slip. We got into a jam—somebody run over—and I just wriggled out of the cab and sent Agnes on to another hotel. They followed her and I came here."

It was such a jolly lark that the girl lay back in her chair and bubbled over with merriment. Mr. Teeters' pale eyes rested on her admiringly.

"Smooth work," he applauded. "Hey, Come-On?"

"Fine," assented Charley. "Make the Major laugh."

Miss Norris nodded. She recovered her composure and observed:

"I wonder what is keeping him? His wireless said he would surely be here to meet me."

"He sent word by Mr. Jones that he'd skipped a cog—couldn't get here for a while," explained Mr. Teeters.

Miss Norris sat up straight and stared at them.

"Mr. Jones? Who is he?" she demanded.

"Don't know," said Charley. "Slim chap. Brown hair. Brown eyes. Quick footwork."

The lady smothered an exclamation and said, speaking laboredly—

"This Mr. Jones—did he say where—my father was?"

"Didn't mention it," Charley answered. "Said he'd tell your father. Send him down to you."

"Oh, he said that!" returned Miss Norris slowly. She stood up and shook out her gown with elaborate care. Charley and Mr. Teeters stood up also. Miss Norris continued: "I'll leave a note for my father, I think, and go on and join Agnes. My box of candied fruit—will you please get it for me? It was absurd of me to burden you with it, Mr. Teeters. I was so excited——"

She came to a limping pause as she looked into the secretary's crestfallen face.

"I'm sorry," he stammered. "Mr. Jones——"

"Oh, I say—Miss Norris! By George!" It was Charley who cried out.

The girl had staggered back and collapsed into the chair she had just vacated. Charley ran to her and fanned her with his hat.

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She was chalk-white, and her violet eyes lay hidden beneath quivering lids.

"Creeping cats!" breathed Mr. Teeters, horrified. "What's happened to her, Come-On?" He hopped from one foot to the other and wrung his hands.

"Get some water!" Charley bade him tartly.

Mr. Teeters started on a run for the door, and then himself staggered back and turned a sickly green. For, bursting into the room, came Major Norris. He was a most unmilitary sight. His eyes were bloodshot and his lips were working loosely, and all the muscles of his face were a-tremble, like bumps of jelly. How he had passed the scrutiny of the office without question of his sobriety was a wonder.

"Madeleine!" he screamed. "Has he been here—Skelton?"

The girl's eyes opened, and she pushed Charley away from her. She regarded her sire not with the joy of the reunited but with unfathomable scorn. Charley forgave this unfilial greeting, for the Major's sorry plight warranted it. As for Mr. Teeters, he simply goggled vacuously at the pair; he was not, was Mr. Teeters, what might be called an emergency-man.

"Be quiet!" was the fond salutation of Miss Norris to her parent. With an effort she got up on her feet and faced him. "Do you want to bring the house about our ears?" she asked fiercely. "And these gentlemen, what will they think?"

"Don't mind us," spoke up Charley. "Shut the door, Percy. Lock it."

"Has Skelton been here?" the Major insisted, though in a lower key.

"Yes," replied Miss Norris, and looked at him coldly. "He's made a fool of you."

"He doped me!" whimpered her father. "Doctored the wine. I suspected it—too late—and spilled most of it; but it did the trick for a time. He's given us the double cross, blast him!"

"Will you be quiet?" Miss Norris hurled this behest at him angrily.

With a tremendous tax upon his will-power the Major called back his scattered wits. He straightened his shoulders, pushed out his chest and plucked at his imperial; and he essayed a wan smile at Mr. Carter and Mr. Teeters.

"By Heavens, boys, I've had an experience!" he mumbled. "Shocking!"

His daughter turned from contemplation of him to the young men with a gesture of contempt.

"Don't think he's quite crazy," she begged. "This Skelton—or Jones, as he called himself to you—had business dealings with my father. I warned him against the man, but he wouldn't listen, and now—well, we've got to find him, that's all. We've got to!"

"That box of candied fruit——" began Mr. Teeters.

"Oh, it has nothing to do with it," Miss Norris protested with a strained smile.

The Major seemed to have regained his grip on himself.

"Come," he exclaimed, "we are wasting time. Skelton will jump a train for Denver. I think I know where we can catch him, though, before he makes his getaway—his start," he amended hastily. "Will you go along, boys? He'll fight, and we may need help."

"Yes—yes! Do come!" entreated the girl, who doubtless felt that her father needed reënforcements.

"Sure," responded Charley blithely. He was a pet pupil of the celebrated Joseph Link, former champion middleweight, and the prospect of a set-to was alluring. Besides, he felt a liking for this fair young woman of moods and mystery.

"Kept my car waiting,' he added. "Lucky."

THEY hurried silently down to the street, Mr. Teeters bringing up the rear. He was of a peaceable nature, and violence of any kind held no candle to his desires. He had nothing in the world against Mr. Jones—or whatever his name was—except a slight pique at his unceremonious methods, and had he consulted his own inclinations that gentleman could have gone to Denver, or a warmer place, without let or hindrance from him. But where Mr. Carter led, Mr. Teeters, in virtue of his office, felt constrained to follow, and he did so now with drear misgivings.

Major Norris gave concise directions to Charley's chauffeur, and they whirled away from the Rirebien. A moment later a lake-blue limousine, hugging the curb a few yards farther to the west, started up and purred along at a discreet distance behind the yellow car. The occupants were in retirement, for the curtains were closely drawn, but an occasional wisp of smoke made its

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way into the outer air, and its aroma, could one have sniffed it, spoke of a weed of high degree—big and black and oily.

The yellow car wheeled into Fifth Avenue and took a straight course down that thoroughfare; but at the intersection with Broadway at Twenty-third Street Charley gave a sharp command, and even before the brakes were set jumped out. He returned with a portly gentleman whom he had rounded up on the walk, and with whom he had exchanged a few earnest words. This was no other than Mr. Samuel Drew. By the merest chance Charley's eye had singled him out on one of the busiest corners on the globe.

Mr. Drew looked slightly perplexed, and Major Norris looked more than slightly perturbed as he recognized him; but he concealed this expression instantly. Mr. Teeters, it may be mentioned, looked immensely relieved. He felt as if the aegis of the Law had been cast about him.

"By George!" exulted Charley, after Mr. Drew had been presented to Miss Norris. "Luck, Major. Lawyers get you out of trouble as well as in. Ought to have one in every home. Say, how's that?"

He grinned expansively at this little joke, and winked at the lady sitting opposite him. But the point was apparently lost on her; her gaze was frowningly fixed on the passing throng.

The yellow car went on, and the blue car, which had also stopped, took up its way again. At Washington Square Charley's man swerved east, along Waverly Place to Broadway and down to one of the lowest numbered streets. A few blocks farther east the machine, at a signal from the Major, came to a stand. At the same time the limousine, a block behind, shied around a sheltering corner.

When they were all out on the sidewalk Major Norris turned to Mr. Drew. He had evidently decided to make the best of that plump person's unexpected addition to the party, for he said:

"It is just as well you are along, sir. This fellow we are after is a desperate character, and the presence of the Law may serve to intimidate him."

"Eh? What's that?" ejaculated the attorney, and his ruddy countenance lost a bit in coloring. "It's a case for the police, then. Let us have one in."

He looked about him, but there was not a bluecoat in sight. Mr. Teeters also searched the horizon with an anxious eye.

"No—no police," decreed the Major. "We don't want them mixing in with this. Skelton has a—er—paper I wish to get, and a bluff may do it. The police would only queer things. We'll rush his room and take him by surprise. If he shows his teeth——"

"Leave him to me," requested Mr. Carter with pleased anticipation. "Maybe I can keep him busy. Come on! Show us the house."

IV

MAJOR NORRIS piloted them half way down the block to a brick front with brownstone trimmings. It was warm and the street-door, as it chanced, stood open.

"Now!" whispered the Major.

The party charged the steps and were well up the stairs inside when a stridulous feminine voice hailed them from the back hall, growing nearer as the owner raced forward.

"Here! Who are you? Who are you looking for? What do you want?"

The questions were fired at them with gatling velocity.

"Shut up!" hissed Major Norris over the banisters. "That's the door—right in front of you, Charley. Quick!"

Charley sprang to it and tried the knob. There was no resistance, and he walked into the room.

"Gone!" he shouted.

The others filed in, and Major Norris closed the door. The voice below had ceased suddenly.

"Ha!" yapped Mr. Teeters, whose spirits had risen from zero to a hundred above. "Fuzzy sort of coop the rooster left behind."

The room, in fact, betrayed the evidences of hasty flight. A hurricane might have swept through it from the appearance of things. Drawers were left hanging open in their grooves, odds and ends of clothing were scattered on bed and chairs, and the floor was a waste of old newspapers, burned matches, cigar-stumps and other immaterial flotsam that had been knocked down, upset and kicked aside in Mr. Skelton's imperative need to absent himself.

Miss Norris glanced around this expanse of desolation and her eyes came to rest on her father's face. He moved away from her

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as if a dagger-thrust had been delivered at him. Then from between the girl's pearly teeth shot a word startlingly incongruous in one so daintily fashioned—

"Bilked!"

It was all she said, and she turned to go. But a cry from Mr. Teeters arrested her; he had been poking around in the corners.

"Here's all that candied fruit! He threw it away. Merry Moses!"

Miss Norris darted back from the door, and the Major took a quick step forward. Mr. Drew looked helplessly at Charley, but Charley was gravely watching Mr. Teeters. The latter had lifted a dilapidated waste-basket from the corner and was carrying it to the table near the chimney-piece.

"Candied fruit?" questioned the lawyer. "Where does that fit in?"

No one replied. Mr. Teeters dumped the contents of the basket on the table and regarded it ruefully.

"What do you say to that, Come-On? You'd think it was poisoned, hey?"

He fell back hurriedly from the table, for the Major, with a sort of snarl, had precipitated himself on the fruit and was clawing it over.

"Upon my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Drew, amazed at the sight.

And then Miss Norris gave a cry. She picked up the box cover and stuck it under her father's nose.

"Look at that! It's not mine; mine was from Hayden's on the Strand."

"It's the one Jones got from me," offered Mr. Teeters quaveringly. "I bought it at Leroy's; paid four dollars for it."

Major Norris drew a long breath and pulled at the tuft of hair on his chin. He was struggling to command himself. But Miss Norris addressed Mr. Teeters in honeyed tones.

"Oh, I see," she remarked. "My box is still at the hotel?"

The Major bent forward eagerly to catch the answer. He was breathing hard.

"No," Charley explained for his unhappy secretary. "Percy spilled it in the car. Accident. Pitched it out. Bought another——"

A burst of hysterical laughter stopped him. Miss Norris dropped on the tousled bed and rocked to and fro. Her hands were clasped to her breast, and her toe-tips beat a tattoo on the floor.

"It's the limit!" she babbled. "The limit! The limit!" And she kept repeating the cry over and over again, laughing and weeping by turns.

"My Lord! What does all this mean, Carter?" demanded Mr. Drew, pale with apprehension.

Major Norris took upon himself the answer.

"It means," he bellowed, "that you couldn't trust a bag of peanuts with that pop-eyed ass of a tailor's dummy over there. He'd lose it if you locked him up with it in a steel safe ten feet thick!"

"I say!" twittered Mr. Teeters. "I didn't go to do it. I——"

"Bah!" sneered the Major, and strode over to his daughter. He laid an ungentle hand on her shoulder and shook it.

"Leave off, you little fool!" he snapped. "Let us get out of this."

His touch seemed to rouse the girl to fury. She leaped from the bed and struck at him viciously.

"You bungler!" she blazed. "You old doddering dotard! You are to blame for this! Why didn't you follow them to the ship? Why didn't you keep an eye on them? I held my end up, but you——!"

An ecstasy of rage possessed her. She whirled around to the others and shrilled out:

"Look at him! Do for the love of Heaven look at this imitation man! I just want you to know that he is not my——"

But she did not finish. The door swung open violently and Morton Butler glowered on them from the threshold. He was alone. Physical fear was an emotion he had never known. He had risen from a brakeman, and he could still roughneck it when it suited him, as it did just now; for he was entering, as he believed, a den of thieves.

"I thought so!" he growled as his eyes fell upon the table. He leveled a gnarled forefinger at Mr. Teeters, who shrank before it as if it were a pistol barrel. "It came to me after you had gone. And they let you pass, the blockheads!" He took a slow survey of the room. "I've caught you red-handed, it seems—the whole caboodle of you."

Miss Norris laughed—a mirthless laugh, it is true, yet not lacking in spirit. She was herself again.

"You've caught a soap-bubble, that's all, Mr. Morton Butler," she mocked. "This pleasant gentleman with the high complexion is Mr. Samuel Drew, a respected

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member of the bar, and this—" she flashed a challenging glance at Charley— "this is my father. The other two you have met before."

"You must remember me, Mr. Butler," said the lawyer, coming forward. "I was for you with Amos Hoyle in the P. & L. merger, back in 1910."

He held out his hand. The old man took it casually, and dropped it.

"I know you now," he grunted. "What are you doing in this mess?"

"The Lord knows," responded Mr. Drew. Whereupon he related succinctly how he had been picked up by Mr. Carter, his client, and carted off in ignorance of his mission.

"Charley, shall we go?" asked Miss Norris lightly. "I think we've had enough of this."

Mr. Butler moved away a step or two from the exit.

"You'll find a couple of men downstairs waiting for you," he observed ironically.

"Oh, in that case," returned Miss Norris with a most engaging smile, "we couldn't think of leaving you—not until we have your kind permission."

She sat down with an air of meek resignation, and the Major hovered at her side. He appeared singularly mild and tractable. It seemed to be his sole desire to divert attention from himself.

"Look here!" said Charley, approaching the lowering figure by the door, "you're a business man. Get busy. What do you want?"

Morton Butler let his cold gray eyes bore into the hazel ones that were fixed on him. Charley calmly stood the scrutiny.

"Humph!" snorted the magnate. "What are you doing in this hole with those two crooks?"

"Friends," said Charley stoutly. "Came with them. Looking for a man—Jones. Skipped."

The other said nothing. It was his finger, pointed obdurately at the table, which asked a question. Charley answered it.

"Bought that at Leroy's. Gave it to Jones to take to Major Norris. Didn't do it, and we found it here."

"And the first box—the one on the ship?" Mr. Butler's voice rang out sharp and stern.

"I fell down with it," piped Mr. Teeters tremulously. "My foot slipped."

"Spilled it all over the floor of my car," added Mr. Carter. "Threw it in the street as we went uptown. Bought another box for the lady."

The big man looked a full half minute into Charley's eyes.

"Good Heavens!" he groaned suddenly. "The ruby is lost beyond recall—crushed, or swept up and carted off!"

"AH! SO that's it?" Mr. Drew, who had been putting two and two together, was enlightened all at once. "The ruby, you think, was brought in tucked away in a candied fruit?"

"How ridiculous!" murmured Miss Norris. "And not a bit of proof."

Morton Butler found a chair and sat down. He looked older and less forceful than when he entered.

"I'd give twice the reward I offered to get that ruby back," he said wearily. "There's not one like it above ground. And—" he glared at the girl—"I'd give twice ten thousand dollars to jail the thieves."

Miss Norris made a clucking noise with her tongue. She was like a little bantam which by some miracle of good luck has put to flight a hawk.

"Poor man!" she sighed. "It's hard—very. Would you mind now if we went away? We are pressed for time, really. Charley, won't you please call up those men? Perhaps Mr. Butler will be good enough to tell them not to annoy us."

The old gentleman motioned an indifferent assent—as if nothing mattered now—and Charley called up the men. They were Revenue Service agents. The railroad magnate spoke a word to them, and they reluctantly stood aside for Miss Norris to pass.

"You're not coming, Charley?" she questioned plaintively. "Well, I can hardly blame you—such pleasant company." For a fleeting instant she caught the boy's eye. Perhaps she read a warning in it, for she delayed no longer.

"Good-by, all!" she called out gaily, and tripped from the room. The Major followed closely. He was already beginning to straighten up and push out his chest.

Charley stepped over to the door and pulled it to, shutting in with him the detectives. Then he addressed the despairing jewel-fancier.

"Doubled that reward, you said. Mean it? Fifty thousand?"

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The old man looked at his questioner dully.

"Fifty thousand," he rasped. "And twenty for the thieves."

Charley waved this latter statement aside.

"Hear that, Mr. Drew? Fifty thousand for Brahma's Eye. Witness?"

"Yes! Yes!" exclaimed the lawyer. He was gazing at Mr. Carter with strained attention. He seemed now to sense the dénouement of this drama in which he had played an unintelligible part.

"All right," said Charley coolly. "I can tell you, Mr. Butler, where your ruby is. Got to promise, though, that nobody shall leave the room for thirty minutes. A go?"

The great man raised his head with sudden hope, and his voice shook a little as he replied. This ruby was to his collector's pride what an only child is to its mother.

"I promise," he said. "Tell me."

Charley drew the purple silk handkerchief from his pocket and threw the corners apart, and there, exposed on his extended palm, lay the wondrous stone—a glowing, glorious, lucent eye of marvelous sunset hue.

"Gollamighty!" squeaked Mr. Teeters. "They were conning us all the time!" He wiggled his mustache, and retired within himself.

"Found it in a plum—big one—when I was chucking out that candied fruit," stated Charley. "Had an idea I'd run across it. Wanted to see what the girl would do. Fun."

A gasp of delight had issued from Morton Butler's lips, and now he reached out ravenously for the gem. He was oblivious of all else.

One of the Secret Service men moved softly to the door.

"Hold up!" Charley cautioned him. "Thirty minutes."

"But the girl?" frowned the man.

"Good little sport. Plucky. Give her a fair start," Charley told him.

"Boy!" cried out Mr. Drew. "You are letting twenty thousand dollars slip through your fingers. It would make you, all told, a hundred thousand to the good. Have you thought of that?"

There was a bare five seconds of silence in the room. Then—

"Sure," said Charley.

STOLEN SIGNALS

By Hugh S. Fullerton

THE things I am going to relate happened, and not many years ago, in one of the major baseball leagues. I am not going to tell which league it was, nor shall I name the clubs, because they are sensitive about such things and prone to denials. It was two years before I could patch together enough facts and guess at others to learn what had happened, which is not good reporting.

Of course, after the players discovered that I knew part of it, they gave me the details, leaving me to mourn not having had them at the time when it would have made a fine news-story. In telling it now it will be necessary to use fictitious names; but possibly, if you are good at guessing—— But then, that is up to you.

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It is the story of how "Kid" Riley spoiled the finest signal-stealing system ever known in baseball, and probably prevented the Wind-Jammers, with whom he traveled as a sub, from winning a pennant. I nearly said the system was invented. It was not invented, nor evolved—it just happened.

The Wind-Jammers had a fairly good baseball club that season. The pitching staff was too weak to found pennant-hopes upon, but the team could hit hard; and, as you know, batting covers a lot of weaknesses in a team. It was one of those teams that always are dangerous and that win with decent pitching.

The club had erected a new concrete-and-steel grandstand during the Fall and Winter. The players' benches, following the modern idea, were sunk three feet below the level of the playing field, covered with concrete canopies, and walled in at both ends. The home team was to use the bench back of first base, and the visitors were assigned the one behind third base, so that they were at least a hundred feet apart.

The dedication was delayed until after the opening of the season, and it was the fortune of the club with which I was traveling to be the opposing team on the day of the dedication, which proved a great success. The night after that game I met Kid Riley. I was in one of the newspaper offices when Riley came to the sporting department. It is seldom that a ball player will call on a writer, because they are afraid some of their fellows will accuse them of seeking favors from the reporters. Riley *was* seeking favors and seeking them openly. He told the local baseball reporter that he wanted him to use his influence with the manager to let him play. I was amazed.

"See here, Kid," said the writer, "I can't do that. In the first place I haven't any influence with Bill, and he would tell me to mind my own business. In the second place he would be crazy to put you in the outfield. There are three fellows there who can outhit you."

"I know that," said the Kid. "I ain't wanting any one's job. I'm wanting to help the team. If he'd let me play I'd outhit any one on the club."

"How do you figure that?" inquired the writer.

"I've got something," he answered mysteriously. "Wait till I get in there and I'll show you."

He went away half angry because the writer would not help him, and we laughed over the request and wondered what Riley was up to. But in less than a week Houghton, the left-fielder, injured a leg and Riley was in the game regularly.

Riley was a normal .240 batter, and had done little better than that in the minor leagues. He was a fine fielder, a speedy, brilliant base-runner and a smart player. Every other man in the outfield was hitting .300 or better and Riley did not seem to have a chance to be a regular. But when he got into the game he started batting at a rate to make him seem a Cobb or a Jackson.

In his first six games he batted better than .500, and when the team left home for a long trip he had a record of .463 for fourteen games and was the sensation of the league. No one could understand his sudden change of form. On the road Riley's batting showed a sharp decline, and in a week Houghton was back in left field with Riley on the bench. He seemed glad to get out of the game while the team was traveling, but on the way home he begged the manager to put him back in the field and promised to hit as hard as he had done before.

Riley had spoken several times of "having something," both to reporters and players; but what he possessed was a mystery to every one until a week after the club had been on its home grounds. The Wind-Jammers were playing an extra-inning game against the champions, who had scored a run in the first of the eleventh inning. Then the Jammers got two men on bases with two out, and Bill, the manager, sent Naylor to bat for Halpin, the pitcher. Naylor was starting to pick out his bat when Riley jumped up from the end of the bench and ran to the manager.

"Let me hit, Bill! Let me hit!" he pleaded excitedly. "I can just kill him."

Bill was a believer in "hunches." He sent Riley to bat, leaving Naylor glaring and threatening to lick him. Riley let a curve go past without moving, then hit a fast ball to left for three bases and won the game.

The crowd, of course, was in a turmoil of excitement, and the teams were diving for the exits when Bill walked to the end of the players' bench and stood stooping over for a moment with one ear inclined toward the

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concrete wall at the end with a peculiar expression on his face. Then he grinned and walked slowly through the cheering crowd to the clubhouse. The players were dressing when he entered and remarked:

"Riley, you and I change seats on the bench tomorrow. Your seat is too lucky."

Riley stared at him a moment, started to say something, but seeing the expression on Bill's face decided to keep quiet. No one understood the meaning of the little scene then, although all remembered it later.

The players gossiped about the change of seats after Bill left the clubhouse. They knew he was somewhat superstitious. For years he had occupied the seat at the corner of the bench farthest from the plate, partly because he had a better view of the field; and he usually sat with his head resting against the back of the bench. The day after Riley made his winning hit Bill moved to the corner of the bench nearest the plate and sat leaning forward, with his hands on his knees and the side of his head almost against the side wall that screened the players from view of the crowd in the stands.

THE change of seats worked wonders. The Wind-Jammers commenced to hit the ball at a rate that astounded all comers. In one week every team that had played against them was complaining, and every pitcher was looking puzzled. The rumor flashed around the league that there was "something funny" about the kind of baseball the Wind-Jammers were playing and the manner in which they were hitting.

Every man on the team suddenly had started batting viciously, and their individual batting averages were rising even more rapidly than the team was moving up in the pennant-race. It had crept up into third place, only five games behind the leaders, and it was playing at a gait that promised to upset all calculations and land it at the top. The team lost only two games during the stay on the home grounds, and went away two games from the lead, and only half a game behind the second club.

The team with which I was traveling had been informed by players of some of the other teams that the secret of it all was that the Wind-Jammers were stealing signals. We knew that at least three other teams had tried in vain to prevent the Wind-Jammers from learning their signals—had changed signs every inning; yet the players were certain the Jammers knew what was going on. One of the best pitchers in the league told me:

"They don't hit naturally. They called the turn on every fast ball I pitched and never moved for the curve or the spit-ball. They took toe-holds every time I put the first ball over the plate, and let it go if I wasted it. We tried changing signals each inning—tried everything. Whenever we played hit-and-run they knew what was coming, and they pitched out every time we started to steal. I tell you, they're getting the signals."

We went to their town for a four-game series, determined to expose the entire thing. We pretended to be unsuspecting, but we had two men out at the center-field fence to watch for some signal-tipping device. One attaché of the club spent the afternoon going from housetop to housetop and examining windows overlooking the park. The trainer was on guard in the clubhouse, and two other fellows were spying around.

The manager had a pair of powerful field-glasses on the bench, through which some one constantly studied the fences, signs, windows and roofs. We sent two men to the grounds early in the morning with sharp iron rods to drive into the dirt around the first- and third-base coaching-boxes to find some electrical device or wires buried there for the purpose of giving signals; and we examined every inch of the concrete around their bench and rodded the earth in front of it—and found nothing.

In the first game they got our star pitcher for fourteen hits and seemed to know exactly what he was going to pitch. In the second game they bombarded two pitchers until they were driven off the slab. They beat us three straight games by big scores and we were glad it rained on the fourth. On that rainy afternoon one of the players of our team conspired with me to get one of the Wind-Jammers who was our friend, and pump him dry. We accused him, as if half in jest, of stealing signals.

"If it is going on I don't know it," he said earnestly. "Old Bill seems to know just what is coming every time. Yesterday he tipped me twice that Jim's fast ball was coming, and I took toe-holds and certainly loosened some of the peel on that old onion. I don't know whether he gets the signs or not—but I don't see how he can."

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His earnestness partially convinced us; but the pitchers and catchers refused to be convinced. They were certain the Wind-Jammers knew what was coming off, and were in despair, arguing on the bench and making up new signals between each inning, always with the same result.

As soon as the Wind-Jammers got off their own grounds they started downward and lost nearly half their games on the trip. Only one or two of them continued to hit hard, and we were more firmly convinced than ever that the secret of their success consisted in knowing what the opposing club was trying to do. I believe, but am not certain, that complaint was made at that time to the President of the league, and that he made an investigation that failed to reveal anything. He evidently was convinced there was nothing in the rumor, and, not desiring a scandal, he used the whitewash.

As soon as the Wind-Jammers got home from their disastrous trip they started batting again at a rate that made opposing pitchers think the team was composed of five Cobbs and four Lajoies. Even the pitchers were mauling the ball hard. One day one of our stars got two strikes on a pitcher who could not hit the size of his shoes, and decided to curve one over for the final strike. That pitcher took a run at the ball, hit it before it curved and drove it to the left-field fence. Our pitcher came off the slab and said he was done when such things happened. Seven clubs believed the Wind-Jammers were stealing the signals, but they could not prove it, nor could they get a clue as to how it was being done.

During that same period strange things were happening on the bench of the Wind-Jammers—things of which we knew nothing until long afterward. Most of their players were in as deep ignorance of what was going on as were the opponents, but were satisfied that something was; so they looked wise and kept silent.

The first unusual thing they observed was that the manager had suddenly become very friendly with Kid Riley and that Riley was acting as a kind of assistant manager. They thought this strange because, earlier in the season, Riley had been in bad standing with Bill, and it was supposed that he would be sent to the minor leagues.

Then, just after Bill moved his seat to the opposite end of the bench, Riley became prime favorite and seemed to be able to do anything he wanted to do without a rebuff. The majority of ball-players keep as far as possible from the manager during a game, but after Bill moved, Riley, who, prior to that time had kept the bench-length away, snuggled up close to him.

Between Riley and the other players there always was a pile of coats, sweaters, gloves and excess baggage. It is evident now that the coats were heaped there with a purpose. Also it is clear that Bill worked upon the superstitions of his players to explain or conceal his reason for changing seats. He frequently spoke of the "luck" that had resulted from his change of position on the bench, and some of the players really attributed their batting to "luck" and gave it little further thought.

From the later testimony of the players I find that late in the first series Gregory, one of the pitchers, proclaimed in the clubhouse one evening that he "knew what was coming off." Bill winked at him quickly and he became silent, and after a talk with Bill the next day he moved down to the end of the bench occupied by Bill and Riley and shoved the barrier of coats toward the middle of the bench.

The week after the team came home for the second series, Fox and Wiley made some kind of discovery over which they became much excited—whispered and chuckled over it through one entire afternoon; and the next day, after a conference with Bill that added to the mystery, they moved down beyond the pile of coats and closer to the manager. Afterward several of the players claimed that they knew all the time what was going on, but I think only those five really knew, and that the others were guessing.

THE terrific batting of the Wind-Jammers and their steady advance toward the pennant revived the rumors and charges of signal-stealing. This time the league officials scoffed at the charges and refused to listen to any accusations. It was even asserted from official sources that the improvement in the team's batting was due to the change in the color of the outfield fence and removal of signs.

Opposing pitchers, however, refused to accept this theory. They knew the Wind-Jammers were hitting pitched balls that logically they never should have swung at, and letting curves go that they ordinarily

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would have been fooled on. The team with which I was traveling was indignant but helpless, and raged because it was unable to furnish proof of anything.

For their benefit I compiled averages to prove that the performances of the Wind-Jammers were at least extraordinary. The figures showed the batting of the Wind-Jammers at home and abroad—individual averages, and finally a table showing how often, when our team tried the hit-and-run, to sacrifice, or to steal, the Wind-Jammers knew what to expect. The figures were too convincing to be attributed to coincidence. After they had beaten us three out of four games and lost the other one 8 to 6 we went away, rejoicing that we were not to return again that season—and as mystified as ever.

The Wind-Jammers were close to the leaders of the league race, and as they had about thirty-six games to play on the home grounds and fewer than twenty on the road, it looked as if they might win and beat out three clubs that undeniably were stronger.

But they didn't. Just when their chances seemed best, something happened, and they slid back rapidly. It was more than two years before I could find out what had happened. When I made inquiries, the players who knew anything only grinned, and those who did not looked wise and pretended knowledge, so I was as much in the dark as before. Finally, by patching circumstances together, I found out much of the truth, and they told me the remainder.

It might have gone on forever but for the fact that one afternoon while they were playing the Swallows, Manager Bill had a headache. He gave up his seat at the end of the bench to Riley, who leaned forward and stuck his head out of the coop with his cheek pressed close to the concrete. Occasionally he would lean back and tell Bill something, and Bill would issue orders to the batter who was going to the plate. Riley had been in the game the preceding day and had made four hits, so the players noticed it when Cotter was sent to the field and Riley kept on the bench. They noticed it more because Riley, who usually sulked under such treatment, seemed pleased.

The game was going along rapidly. The Wind-Jammers were pounding the ball fiercely and threatening to run up a big score. In the sixth inning Malone, pitching for the Swallows, returned to the bench hot and angry after being knocked out, and sat down next to Riordan, who had been knocked off the slab the preceding day. Probably he felt certain of sympathy from Riordan, and they were consoling each other and accusing the Wind-Jammers of stealing their signals.

"I don't know how they do it," wailed Malone. "We switched signals twice, trying to cross them, and last inning Pat caught me without signals. You remember we said last inning they were hitting the second ball, and to cross them by sticking the first over? Well, they knew what was coming, and we never used a signal."

"Same with me yesterday," mourned Riordan. "That four-flushing, yellow, minor-league shrimp Riley got three hits off me. I wouldn't have minded any one else getting them; but *him!* If he could hit at all I wouldn't say a word, but he couldn't hit .200 in a bush league. He's as yellow as they make 'em——"

The benches were more than one hundred feet apart; but suddenly Riley jumped out from the end of the Wind-Jammers' bench, stuck his face down close to the concrete wall and shouted—

"You're a liar; and I can lick you the best day you ever lived, you big, four-flushing stiff, you——"

There was uproar on both benches. Manager Bill jumped for Riley and dragged him backward. Every player on the Swallows' bench started up in amazement, then crowded into one end of the bench, talking, pointing and gesticulating wildly. The umpires turned in surprise, and it required their efforts for several minutes to compel the players to continue the game.

The secret was out. A copper rain-spout ended just above the visitors' bench, ran up a column, and under the eaves joined another down-spout that ended at the nearer end of the home team's bench. It acted as a telephone; and any one sitting with an ear close to the end of the spout at the home bench could hear every word spoken on the visitors' bench, while the other end was placed so high the visitors would have had to stand on their bench to listen. Manager Bill and Riley had been listening for weeks to the orders and plans of the opposing teams, and always knew what to expect!

The rain-spouts were torn down that night, and the Wind-Jammers finished in the second division.

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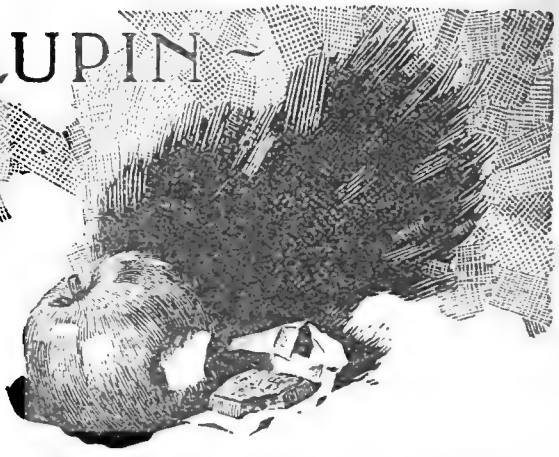
ARSÈNE LUPIN AND THE TIGER'S TEETH



By Maurice Leblanc

SYNOPSIS—*Cosmo Mornington*, dead in Paris, has willed 100,000,000 francs to any French cousin or cousin's child in the order of kinship. If none be found within three months, the bequest goes to *Don Luis Perenna*, a Spanish-Peruvian, late of the French Foreign Legion serving in Morocco. Perenna is to hunt up the heirs himself. It is generally understood that Perenna is *Arsène Lupin*, but no action can be taken against him for his former misdeeds, owing to the fact that he has tricked the authorities into officially pronouncing Lupin dead.

Perenna proves that Mornington was poisoned; that *Police Inspector Vérot*, who had solved the mystery surrounding Mornington's death, was poisoned, and a blank sheet of paper substituted for his report; that *Hippolyte Fauville* and his son *Edmond*, Mornington's next of kin, were poisoned; that Edmond's stepmother is Hippolyte's cousin as well as his wife, and is now in line for the millions. Many circumstances point to *Mme. Fauville's* guilt, the chief one being this: Vérot left a tooth-marked bit of chocolate as evidence; an apple with the same tooth-marks is found in Fauville's garden; and Mme. Fauville's teeth register identically the same marks. "The Tiger's Teeth!"

Mme. Fauville builds up an equally plausible case against Perenna as residuary legatee, and calls for his arrest instead of hers. But *M. Desmalions, Prefect of Police*, who from the very first had detected Perenna's interest in the matter, has already placed Perenna under provisional restraint.

CHAPTER V

THE TEETH OF THE TIGER

THE last words of Mme. Fauville's denunciation of Don Luis Perenna were pronounced in a hardly intelligible fashion. She had no strength left. She had to sit down, with her head bent over her knees, and she wept once more, abundantly. Perenna went up to her and, raising her forehead and uncovering the tear-stained face, said:

"The imprints of teeth in both apples are absolutely identical. There is therefore no doubt whatever but that the first comes from you as well as the second."

"No!" she said.

"Yes," he affirmed. "That is a fact which it is actually impossible to deny. But the first impression may have been left by you before last night; that is to say, you may have bitten that apple yesterday, for instance——"

She stammered: "Do you think so? . . . Yes, perhaps; I seem to remember . . . yesterday morning——"

But the Prefect of Police interrupted her.

"It is useless, madame; I have just questioned your servant, Silvestre. He bought the fruit himself at eight o'clock last evening. When M. Fauville went to bed there were four apples in the dish. At eight o'clock this morning there were only three. Therefore the one found in the garden is incontestably the fourth; and this fourth apple was marked last night. And the mark is the mark of your teeth."

She stammered: "It was not I . . . It was not I . . . That mark is not mine."

"But——"

"That mark is not mine. . . . I swear it as I hope to be saved. . . . And I also swear that I shall die; yes, die! . . . I

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prefer death to prison. . . . I shall kill myself. . . . I shall kill myself——"

Her eyes were staring before her. She stiffened her muscles and made the supreme effort to rise from her chair. But, once on her feet, she tottered and fell fainting on the floor.

It was with the most intense relief that Detective Sergeant Mazeroux watched the net tighten about Mme. Fauville. Mazeroux had an intimately personal interest in seeing Perenna vindicated; for before his reformation he had been one of Lupin's assistant criminals, and later, when Lupin, masquerading as M. Lenormand, had been made Chief of the French Secret Service, Mazeroux had received his appointment to the Paris police force through his old chief's influence.

Thus, then, although prepared unflinchingly to do his duty as a police officer even to the extent of arresting Perenna if called on, nevertheless he was prompted by every feeling of old-time association, loyalty and gratitude to hope that the evidence would point to the guilt of any one other than "the chief." Mme. Fauville? As good a suspect as any; he cared nothing for her.

But no sooner did Perenna extricate himself from one danger than another loomed up. This was indicated to him covertly by Mazeroux, when the stir caused by Mme. Fauville's collapse left the pair unobserved for a moment.

"Clear out, chief." whispered the detective.

"Ah! So the orders are revoked? I'm free?"

"Chief, take a look at the fellow who came in ten minutes ago and who's talking to the Prefect. Do you know him?"

"Hang it all!" said Perenna, after glancing at a large, red-faced man who did not take his eyes off him. "Hang it, it's Weber, the deputy chief!"

"And he's recognized you, chief! He recognized Lupin at first sight. There's no fake that he can't see through. He's got the knack of it. Well, chief, just think of all the tricks you've played on him and ask yourself if he'll stick at anything to have his revenge!

"Besides, the Prefect has ordered all of us to keep you in view. If you make the least show of trying to escape the police, they'll collar you."

"In that case there's nothing to be done?"

"Nothing to be done? Why, it's a question of putting them off your scent, and quickly!"

"What good would that do me, as I'm going home and they know where I live?"

"Eh, what? Can you have the cheek to go home after what's happened?"

"Where do you expect me to sleep? Under the bridges?"

"But, hang it all, don't you understand that, after this job, there will be the most infernal stir, that you're compromised up to the neck as it is, and that everybody will turn against you?"

"Well?"

"Drop the business."

"And the murderers of Cosmo Mornington and the Fauvilles?"

"The police will see to that."

"Alexandre, you're an ass."

"Then become Lupin again, the invisible, impregnable Lupin, and do your own fighting, as you used to. But in Heaven's name don't remain Perenna! It is too dangerous. And don't occupy yourself officially with a business in which you are not interested."

"The things you say, Alexandre! I am interested in it to the tune of a hundred millions. If Perenna does not stick to his post, the hundred millions will be snatched from under his nose. And, on the one occasion when I can earn a few honest centimes, that would be most annoying."

"And, if they arrest you?"

"Can't! I'm dead!"

"Lupin is dead. But Perenna is alive."

"As they haven't arrested me today, I'm easy in my mind."

"It's only put off. And the orders are strict from this moment onward. They mean to surround your house and to keep watch day and night."

"Good! I always was frightened at night."

"But, what are you hoping for?"

"I hope for nothing, Alexandre. I am sure. I am sure now that they will not dare arrest me."

"Do you imagine that Weber will stand on ceremony?"

"I don't care a hang about Weber. Without orders, Weber can do nothing."

"But they'll give him his orders."

"The order to shadow me, yes; to arrest me, no. The Prefect of Police has committed himself about me to such an extent that he will be obliged to back me up. And then there's this: the whole affair is so

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absurd, so complicated, that you people will never find your way out of it alone. Sooner or later, you will come and fetch me. For there is no one but myself able to fight such adversaries as these: not you, nor Weber, nor any of your pals at the detective office. I shall expect your visit, Alexandre."

ON THE next day an expert examination identified the tooth prints on the two apples and likewise established the fact that the print on the cake of chocolate was similar to the others.

Also, the driver of a taxicab came and gave evidence that a lady engaged him as she left the Opera, told him to drive her straight to the end of the Avenue Henri-Martin and left the cab there.

Now the end of the Avenue Henri-Martin was within five minutes' walk of the Fauvilles' house.

The man was brought into Mme. Fauville's presence and recognized her at once.

What had she done in that neighborhood for over an hour?

Marie Fauville was taken to the central lockup, was entered on the register, and slept that night at the Saint-Lazare Prison.

That same day when the reporters were beginning to publish details of the investigation, such as the discovery of the tooth prints, but when they did not yet know to whom to attribute them, two of the leading dailies used as a catchword for their article the very words which Don Luis Perenna had employed to describe the marks on the apple, the sinister words which so well suggested the fierce, savage and, so to speak, brutal character of the incident:

THE TEETH OF THE TIGER

CHAPTER VI

THE IRON CURTAIN

IT IS sometimes an ungrateful task to tell the story of Arsène Lupin's life, for the reason that each of his adventures is partly known to the public, having at the time formed the subject of much eager comment, whereas his biographer is obliged, if he would throw light upon what is not known, to begin at the beginning and to relate in full detail all that which is already public property.

It is because of this necessity that I am compelled to speak once more of the extreme excitement which the news of that shocking series of crimes created in France, in Europe, and throughout the civilized world. The public heard of four murders practically all at once, for the particulars of Cosmo Mornington's will were published two days later.

There was no doubt that the same person had killed Cosmo Mornington, Inspector Vérot, Fauville the engineer, and his son Edmond. The same person had made the identical sinister bite, leaving against himself or herself, with a heedlessness that seemed to show the avenging hand of Fate, a most impressive and incriminating proof, a proof which made people shudder as they would have shuddered at the awful reality: the marks of his or her teeth, the teeth of the tiger!

And, in the midst of all this bloodshed, at the most tragic moment of the dismal tragedy, behold the strangest of figures emerging from the darkness!

A heroic adventurer, endowed with astounding intelligence and insight, had in a few hours partly unraveled the tangled skeins of the plot, divined the murder of Cosmo Mornington, proclaimed the murder of Inspector Vérot, taken the conduct of the investigation into his own hands, delivered to justice the inhuman creature whose beautiful white teeth fitted the marks as precious stones fit their settings, received a check for a million francs on the day after these exploits and, finally, found himself the probable heir to an immense fortune.

And here was Arsène Lupin coming to life again!

For the public made no mistake about that and, with wonderful intuition, proclaimed aloud that Don Luis Perenna was Arsène Lupin, before a close examination of the facts had more or less confirmed the supposition.

"But he's dead!" objected the doubters.

To which the others replied:

"Yes, Dolores Kesselbach's corpse was recovered under the still smoking ruins of a little chalet near the Luxembourg frontier and, with it, the corpse of a man whom the police identified as Arsène Lupin. But everything goes to show that the whole scene was contrived by Lupin, who, for reasons of his own, wanted to be thought dead. And everything shows that the police accepted and legalized the theory of his death

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only because they wished to be rid of their everlasting adversary.

"As a proof, we have the confidences made by Valenglay, who was Prime Minister at the time and whom the chances of politics have just replaced at the head of the Government. And there is the mysterious incident on the island of Capri, when the German Emperor, just as he was about to be buried under a landslip, was saved by a hermit who, according to the German version, was none other than Arsène Lupin."

To this came a fresh objection:

"Very well; but read the newspapers of the time: ten minutes afterward the hermit flung himself into the sea from Tiberius' Leap."

And the answer:

"Yes, but the body was never found. And, as it happens, we know that a steamer picked up a man who was making signals to her, and that this steamer, was on her way to Algiers. Well, a few days later, Don Luis Perenna enlisted in the Foreign Legion at Sidi-bel-Abbes."

Of course the controversy upon which the newspapers embarked on this subject was carried on discreetly. Everybody was afraid of Lupin; and the journalists maintained a certain reserve in their articles, confined themselves to comparing dates and pointing out coincidences, and refrained from speaking too positively of any Lupin that might lie hidden under the mask of Perenna.

But, as regards the private in the Foreign Legion and his stay in Morocco, they took their revenge and let themselves go freely.

Major d'Astrignac had spoken. Other officers, other comrades of Perenna's, related what they had seen. The reports and daily orders concerning him were published. And what became known as "The Hero's Idyll" began to take the form of a sort of record, each page of which described the maddest and unlikeliest of facts.

At Médiouna, on the twenty-fourth of March, the adjutant, Captain Pollex, awarded Private Perenna four days' cells on a charge of having broken out of camp past two sentries after evening roll-call, contrary to orders, and being absent without leave until noon on the following day. Perenna, the report went on to say, brought back the body of his sergeant, killed in ambush. And in the margin was this note, in the Colonel's hand:

The Colonel commanding doubles Private Perenna's award, but mentions his name in orders and congratulates and thanks him.

After the fight of Ber-Réchid, Lieutenant Fardet's detachment being obliged to retreat before a band of four hundred Moors, Private Perenna asked leave to cover the retreat by installing himself in a *kasba*.

"How many men do you want, Perenna?"

"None, sir."

"What! Surely you don't propose to cover a retreat all by yourself?"

"What pleasure would there be in dying, sir, if others were to die as well as I?"

At his request they left him a dozen rifles and divided with him the cartridges that remained. His share came to seventy-five.

The detachment got away without being further molested. Next day, when they were able to return with reënforcements, they surprised the Moors lying in wait around the *kasba*, beseiging Perenna, but afraid to approach too closely. The ground was covered with seventy-five of their killed.

Our men drove them off. They found Private Perenna stretched on the floor of the *kasba*. They thought him dead. He was asleep! He had not a single cartridge left. But each of his seventy-five bullets had gone home.

What struck the imagination of the public most, however, was Major Comte d'Astrignac's story of the battle of Dar-Dbibarh. The Major confessed that this battle, which relieved Fez at the moment when we thought that all was lost and which created such a sensation in France, was won before it was fought, and that it was won by Perenna alone!

At daybreak, when the Moorish tribes were preparing for the attack, Private Perenna lassoed an Arab horse that was galloping across the plain, sprang on the animal, which had no saddle, bridle nor any sort of harness, and, without jacket, cap or arms, with his white shirt bulging out and a cigarette between his teeth, charged, with his hands in his trousers-pockets!

He charged straight toward the enemy, galloped through their camp, riding in and out among the tents and then left it by the same place by which he had gone in.

This quite inconceivable death-ride spread such consternation among the Moors that their attack was half hearted and the battle was won without resistance.

This, together with numberless other

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acts of bravado, went to make up the heroic legend of Perenna. It threw into relief the superhuman energy, the marvelous recklessness, the bewildering fancy, the spirit of adventure, the physical dexterity, and the coolness of a singularly mysterious individual whom it was impossible not to take for Arsène Lupin, but a new and greater Arsène Lupin, dignified, idealized and ennobled by his exploits.

ONE morning, a fortnight after the double murder in the Boulevard Suchet, this extraordinary man—who aroused such eager interest and who was spoken of on every side as a fabulous and more or less impossible being—one morning Don Luis Perenna dressed himself and went the rounds of his house.

It was a comfortable and roomy eighteenth-century mansion, situated at the entrance to the Faubourg Saint-Germain, on the little Place du Palais-Bourbon. He had bought it, furnished, from a rich Hungarian, Count Malonyi, keeping for his own use the horses, carriages, and motor-cars, and taking over the eight servants and even the Count's secretary, Mlle. Levasseur, who undertook to manage the household and to receive and get rid of the visitors—journalists, bores, and curiosity-dealers—attracted by the luxury of the house and the reputation of its new owner.

After finishing his inspection of the stables and garage, he walked across the courtyard and went up to his study, pushed open one of the windows and raised his head. Above him was a slanting mirror; and this mirror reflected, beyond the courtyard and its surrounding wall, one whole side of the Place du Palais-Bourbon.

"Bother!" he said. "Those confounded detectives are still there. And this has been going on for a fortnight! I'm getting tired of this spying."

He sat down, in a bad temper, to look through his letters, tearing up, after he had read them, those which concerned him personally and making notes on the others, such as applications for assistance and requests for interviews. When he had finished, he rang the bell.

"Ask Mlle. Levasseur to bring me the newspapers."

She had been the Hungarian Count's reader as well as his secretary; and Perenna had trained her to pick out in the newspapers anything that referred to him and to give him each morning an exact account of the proceedings that were being taken against Mme. Fauville.

Always dressed in black, with a very elegant and graceful figure, she had attracted him from the first. She had an air of great dignity and a grave and thoughtful face which made it impossible to penetrate the secret of her soul and which would have seemed austere, had it not been framed in a cloud of fair curls, resisting all attempts at discipline and setting a halo of light and gaiety around her.

Her voice had a soft and musical tone which Perenna loved to hear; and, himself a little perplexed by Mlle. Levasseur's attitude of reserve, he wondered what she could think of him, of his mode of life and of all that the newspapers had to tell of his mysterious past.

"Nothing new?" he asked, as he glanced at the headings of the articles.

She read the reports relating to Mme. Fauville; and Don Luis could see that the police investigations were making no headway. Marie Fauville still kept to her first method, that of weeping, making a show of indignation and assuming ignorance of the facts upon which she was being examined.

"It's ridiculous," he said aloud. "I have never seen any one defend herself so clumsily."

"Still, if she's innocent?"

It was the first time that Mlle. Levasseur had uttered an opinion or rather a remark upon the case. Don Luis looked at her in great surprise. "So you think her innocent, mademoiselle?"

She seemed ready to reply and to explain the meaning of her interruption. It was as if she were removing her impassive mask and were about to allow her face to adopt a more animated expression under the impulse of her inner feelings. But she restrained herself with a visible effort, and murmured:

"I don't know. I have no views."

"Possibly," he said, watching her with curiosity, "but you have a doubt; a doubt which would be permissible if it were not for the marks left by Mme. Fauville's own teeth. Those marks, you see, are something more than a signature, more than a confession of guilt. And, as long as she is unable to give a satisfactory explanation of this point——"

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But Marie Fauville vouchsafed not the slightest explanation of this nor of anything else. She remained impenetrable. On the other hand, the police failed to discover her accomplice or accomplices Neither was any trace found of the man with the ebony walking-stick and the tortoise-shell glasses whom the waiter at the Café du Pont-Neuf had described to Mazeroux and who was suspected of having substituted the envelope containing a blank sheet of paper for the letter containing the murdered Vérot's report. In short, there was not a ray of light thrown upon the subject.

Equally vain was all search for the traces of Victor, the Roussel sister's first cousin, who would have inherited the Mornington bequest in the absence of any direct heirs.

"Is that all?" asked Perenna.

"No," said Mlle. Levasseur, "there is an article in the *Echo de France*—"

"Relating to me?"

"I presume so, monsieur. It is called, 'Why Don't They Arrest Him?' "

"That concerns me," he said with a laugh. He took the newspaper and read:

Why do they not arrest him? Why go against logic and prolong an unnatural situation which no decent man can understand? This is the question which everybody is asking and to which our investigations enable us to furnish a precise reply.

Two years ago—in other words, three years after the supposititious death of Arsène Lupin—the police, having discovered or believing they had discovered that Arsène Lupin was really none other than one Floriani, born at Blois and since lost to sight, caused the register to be inscribed, on the page relating to this Floriani, with the word "Deceased," followed by the words, "Under the alias of Arsène Lupin."

Consequently, to bring Arsène Lupin back to life, there would be wanted something more than the undeniable proof of his existence, which would not be impossible. The most complicated wheels in the administrative machine would have to be set in motion and a decree obtained from the Council of State.

Now it would seem that M. Valenglay, the Prime Minister, together with the Prefect of Police, is opposed to making any too minute inquiries, capable of opening up a scandal which the authorities are anxious to avoid. Bring Arsène Lupin back to life? Recommence the struggle with that accursed scoundrel? Risk a fresh defeat and fresh ridicule? No, no, and again no!

And thus is brought about this unprecedented, inadmissible, inconceivable. disgraceful situation, that Arsène Lupin, the hardened thief, the impenitent criminal, the robber-king, the emperor of burglars and swindlers, is able today, not clandestinely, but in the sight and hearing of the whole world, to pursue the most formidable task that he has yet undertaken—to live publicly under a name which is not his own but which he has incontestably made his own, to destroy with impunity four persons who stood in his way, to cause the imprisonment of an innocent woman against whom he himself has accumulated false evidence, and at the end of all, despite the protests of common sense and thanks to an unavowed complicity, to receive the hundred millions of the Mornington legacy.

There is the ignominious truth in a nutshell. It is well that it should be stated. Let us hope, now that it stands revealed, that it will influence the future conduct of events.

"At any rate, it will influence the conduct of the idiot who wrote that article," said Lupin with a grin.

He dismissed Mlle. Levasseur and rang up Major d'Astrignac on the telephone.

"Is that you, Major? Perenna speaking."

"Yes; what is it?"

"Have you read the article in the *Echo de France*?"

"Yes."

"Would it bore you very much to call on that gentleman and ask for satisfaction in my name?"

"Oh! A duel!"

"It's got to be, Major. All these fools are wearying me with their lucubrations. They must be gagged. This fellow will pay for the rest."

"Well, of course, if you're bent on it——"

"I am, very much."

THE preliminaries were entered upon without delay. The editor of the *Echo de France* declared that the article had been sent in without a signature, typewritten, and that it had been published without his knowledge; but he accepted the entire responsibility.

That same day, at three o'clock, Don Luis Perenna, accompanied by Major d'Astrignac, another officer and a doctor, left the house in the Place du Palais-Bourbon in his car and, followed by a taxi crammed with the detectives engaged in watching him, drove to the Parc des Princes.

While waiting for the arrival of the adversary, the Comte d'Astrignac took Don Luis aside.

"My dear Perenna, I ask you no questions. I don't want to know how much truth there is in all that is being written about you, or what your real name is. To me, you are Perenna of the Legion; and that is all I care about. Your past began in Morocco. As for the future, I know that, whatever happens and however great the temptation, your only aim will be to revenge Cosmo Mornington and protect his

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heirs. But there's one thing that worries me."

"Speak out, Major."

"Give me your word that you won't kill this man."

"Two months in bed, Major; will that suit you?"

"Too long. A fortnight."

"Done."

The two adversaries took up their positions. At the second encounter the editor of the *Echo de France* fell, wounded in the chest.

"Oh, that's too bad of you, Perenna!" growled the Comte d'Astrignac. "You promised me——"

"And I've kept my promise, Major."

The doctors were examining the injured man. Presently one of them arose and said:

"It's nothing. Three weeks' rest, at most. Only a third of an inch more and he would have been done for."

"Yes, but that third of an inch isn't there!" murmured Perenna.

Still followed by the detectives' motor-cab, Don Luis returned to the Faubourg Saint-Germain; and it was then that an incident occurred which was to puzzle him greatly and throw a most extraordinary light on the article in the *Echo de France.*

IN the courtyard of his house he saw two little puppies which belonged to the coachman playing with a twist of red string which kept catching on to things, to the railings, to the flower-vases, In the end, the paper around which the string was wound, appeared. Don Luis happened to pass at that moment. His eyes noticed writing on the paper, and he mechanically picked it up and unfolded it.

He gave a start. He had at once recognized the opening lines of the article printed in the *Echo de France.* And the whole article was there, written in ink, on ruled paper, with erasures and with sentences added, stricken out and begun anew.

He called the coachman and asked him—

"Where does this ball of string come from?"

"The string, sir? Why, from the harness-room, I think. It must have been that little she-devil of a Mirza who——"

"And when did you wind the string around the paper?"

"Yesterday evening, monsieur."

"Yesterday evening. I see. And where is the paper from?"

"Upon my word, monsieur, I can't say. I wanted something to wind my string on. I picked this bit up behind the coachhouse where they fling all the rubbish of the house to be taken into the street at night."

Don Luis pursued his investigations. He questioned, or asked Mlle. Levasseur to question, the other servants. He discovered nothing; but one fact remained: the article in the *Echo de France* had been written, as the rough draft which he had picked up proved, by somebody who lived in the house or who was in touch with one of the people in the house.

The enemy was inside the fortress.

But what enemy? And what did he want? Merely Perenna's arrest?

All the remainder of the afternoon Don Luis continued anxious, annoyed by the mystery that surrounded him, incensed at his own inaction and especially at that threatened arrest, which certainly caused him no uneasiness, but which hampered his movements.

Accordingly when he was told at about ten o'clock that a man who gave the name of Alexandre insisted on seeing him, he had the man shown in; and when he found himself face to face with Mazeroux, but Mazeroux disguised beyond recognition and huddled in an old cloak, he flung himself on him as on a prey, hustling and shaking him.

"So it's you at last!" he cried. "Well, what did I tell you? You can't make head nor tail of things at the police office and you've come for me! Confess it, you numskull! You've come to fetch me! Oh, how funny it all is! Gad, I knew that you would never have the cheek to arrest me and that the Prefect of Police would manage to calm the ardor of that confounded Weber!

"To begin with, one doesn't arrest a man whom one has need of. Come, out with it! Lord, how stupid you look! Why don't you answer? How far have you got at the office? Quick, speak! I'll settle the thing in five seconds. Just tell me about your inquiry in two words and I'll finish it for you in the twinkling of a bed-post, in two minutes by my watch. Well, you were saying——"

"But, chief!" spluttered Mazeroux, utterly nonplussed.

"What! Must I drag the words out of you? Come on! I'll make a start. It has to do with the man with the ebony walking-

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stick, hasn't it? The one we saw at the Café du Pont-Neuf on the day when Inspector Vérot was murdered?"

"Yes, it has."

"Have you found his traces?"

"Yes."

"Well, come along, find your tongue!"

"It's like this, chief. Some one else noticed him besides the waiter. There was another customer in the café; and this other customer, whom I ended by discovering, went out at the same time as our man and heard him ask somebody in the street which was the nearest underground station for Neuilly."

"First-rate, that! And, in Neuilly, by asking questions on every side you ferreted him out?"

"And even learned his name, chief: Hubert Lautier, of the Avenue du Roule. Only he decamped from there six months ago, leaving his furniture behind him and taking nothing but two trunks."

"What about the post-office?"

"We have been to the post-office. One of the clerks recognized the description which we supplied. Our man calls once every eight or ten days to fetch his mail, which never amounts to much—just one or two letters. He has not been for some time."

"Is the correspondence in his name?"

"No; initials."

"Were they able to remember them?"

"Yes; B. R. W. 8."

"Is that all?"

"That is absolutely all that I have discovered. But one of my fellow-officers succeeded in proving, from the evidence of two detectives, that a man carrying a silver-handled ebony walking-stick and a pair of tortoise-shell glasses walked out of the Gare d'Auteuil on the evening of the double murder and went toward Ranelagh. Remember the presence of Mme. Fauville in that neighborhood at the same hour. And remember that the crime was committed around about midnight. I conclude from this——"

"That will do; be off!"

"But——"

"Get!"

"Then I don't see you again?"

"Meet me in half an hour outside our man's place."

"What man?"

"Marie Fauville's accomplice."

"But you don't know——"

"The address? Why, you gave it to me yourself: Boulevard Richard - Wallace, number eight. Go! And don't look such a fool."

Lupin made him spin around on his heels, took him by the shoulders, pushed him to the door and handed him over, quite flabbergasted, to a footman.

Lupin himself went out a few minutes later, dragging in his wake the detectives attached to his person, left them posted on sentry-duty outside a block of flats with a double entrance, and took a motor-cab to Neuilly. He went along the Avenue de Madrid on foot and turned down the Boulevard Richard-Wallace, opposite the Bois de Boulogne. Mazeroux was waiting for him in front of a small there-storied house standing at the back of a courtyard contained within the very high walls of the adjoining property.

"Is this number eight?"

"Yes, chief, but tell me how——"

"One moment, old fellow; give me time to recover my breath."

He gave two or three great gasps.

"Lord, how good it is to be up and doing!" he said. "Upon my word I was getting rusty. And what a pleasure to pursue those scoundrels! So you want me to tell you?"

He passed his arm through the sergeant's. "Listen, Alexandre, and profit by my words. Remember this; when a person is choosing initials for his address at the general delivery he doesn't pick them at random, but always in such a way that the letters convey a meaning to the person corresponding with him, a meaning which will enable that other person easily to remember the address."

"And in this case?"

"In this case, Mazeroux, a man like myself, who knows Neuilly and the neighborhood of the Bois, is at once struck by those three letters, 'B. R. W.' and especially by the 'W,' a foreign letter, an English letter. So that in my mind's eye, instantly, as in a flash, I saw the three letters in their logical place as initials at the head of the words for which they stand. I saw the 'B' of 'boulevard,' and the 'R' and the English 'W' of Richard Wallace. And so I came to the Boulevard Richard-Wallace. And that, my dear sir, explains the milk in the cocoanut."

Mazeroux seemed a little doubtful.

"And what do you think, chief?"

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"I think nothing. I am looking about. I am building up a theory on the first basis that offers a probable theory. And I say to myself . . . I say to myself . . . I say to myself, Mazeroux, that this is a devilish mysterious little hole and that this house . . . Hush! Listen——"

He pushed Mazeroux into a dark corner. They had heard a noise, the slamming of a door. Footsteps crossed the courtyard in front of the house. The lock of the outer gate grated. Some one appeared; and the light of a street lamp fell full on his face.

"Well, I'll be——," muttered Mazeroux. "That's the man."

"I believe you're right."

"It's he, chief. Look at the black stick and the bright handle. And did you see the eye-glasses . . . and the beard? What a wonder you are, chief!"

"Calm yourself and let's go after him."

The man had crossed the Boulevard Richard-Wallace and was turning into the Boulevard Maillot. He was walking pretty fast, with his head up, gaily twirling his stick. He lit a cigarette.

At the end of the Boulevard Maillot, the man passed the tax-gate and entered Paris. The railway-station of the outer circle was close by. He went to it and, still followed by the others, stepped into a train that took them to Auteuil.

"That's funny!" said Mazeroux. "He's doing exactly what he did a fortnight ago. This is where he was seen."

The man now went along the fortifications. In a quarter of an hour he reached the Boulevard Suchet and almost immediately afterward the house in which M. Fauville and his son had been murdered.

He climbed the fortifications opposite the house and stayed there for some minutes, motionless, with his face to the front of the house. Then continuing his road he went to La Muette and plunged into the dusk of the Bois de Boulogne.

"To work, and boldly!" said Don Luis, quickening his pace. Mazeroux stopped him.

"What do you mean, chief?"

"Why, catch him by the throat! There are two of us; we couldn't hope for a better moment."

"What! Why, it's impossible!"

"Impossible? Are you afraid? Very well, I'll do it by myself."

"Look here, chief, you're not serious!"

"Why shouldn't I be serious?"

"Because one can't arrest a man without a reason."

"Without a reason? A scoundrel like this? A murderer? What more do you want?"

"In the absence of compulsion, of catching him in the act I want something that I haven't got."

"What's that?"

"A warrant. I haven't a warrant."

Mazeroux's accent was so full of conviction and the answer struck Don Luis Perenna as so comical that he burst out laughing.

"You have no warrant? Poor little chap! Well, I'll soon show you if I need a warrant!"

"You'll show me nothing," cried Mazeroux, hanging on to his companion's arm. "You sha'n't touch the man."

"One would think he was your mother!"

"Come, chief!"

"But, you stick-in-the-mud of an honest man," shouted Don Luis, angrily, "if we let this opportunity slip, shall we ever find another?"

"Easily. He's going home. I'll inform the Commissary of Police. He will telephone to headquarters; and tomorrow morning——"

"And suppose the bird has flown?"

"I have no warrant."

"Do you want me to sign you one, idiot?"

But Don Luis mastered his rage. He felt that all his arguments would be shattered to pieces against the sergeant's obstinacy, and that if necessary Mazeroux would go to the length of defending the enemy against him. He simply said in a sententious tone:

"One ass and you make a pair of asses; and there are as many asses as there are people who try to do police-work with bits of paper, signatures, warrants, and other nonsense. Police-work, my boy, is done with one's fists. When you come upon the enemy hit him. Otherwise you stand a chance of hitting the air. With that, good night. I'm going to bed. Telephone to me when the job is done."

HE WENT home furious, sick of an adventure in which he had not had elbow-room, and in which he had had to submit to the will or rather to the weakness of others.

But next morning when he woke up his longing to see the police lay hold of the man with the ebony stick, and especially the feeling that his assistance would be of use,

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impelled him to dress as quickly as he could.

"If I don't come to the rescue," he thought, "they'll let themselves be well flammed. They're not equal to a contest of this kind."

Just then Mazeroux rang up and asked to speak to him. He rushed to a little telephone-box which his predecessor had fitted up on the first floor, in a dark recess that communicated only with his study, and switched on the electric light.

"Is that you, Alexandre?"

"Yes, chief. I'm speaking from a wine-shop near the house on the Boulevard Richard-Wallace."

"What about our man?"

"The bird's still in the nest. But we're only just in time."

"Really?"

"Yes; he's packed his trunk. He's going away this morning."

"How do they know?"

"Through the woman who manages for him. She's just come to the house and will let us in."

"Does he live alone?"

"Yes; the woman cooks his meals and goes away in the evening. No one ever calls, except a veiled lady who has paid him three visits since he's been here. The housekeeper was not able to see what she was like. As for him, she says he's a scholar, who spends his time reading and working."

"And have you a warrant?"

"Yes; we're going to use it."

"I'll come at once."

"You can't! We've got Weber at our head. Oh, by the way, have you heard the news about Mme. Fauville?"

"About Mme. Fauville?"

"Yes; she tried to commit suicide last night."

"What! Tried to commit suicide?"

Perenna had uttered an exclamation of astonishment and was very much surprised to hear, almost at the same time, another cry, like an echo, at his elbow. Without letting go the receiver, he turned around and saw that Mlle. Levasseur was in the study a few yards away from him, standing with a distorted and livid face. Their eyes met. He was on the point of speaking to her, but she moved away—without leaving the room, however.

"What the devil was she listening for?" Don Luis wondered. "And why that look of dismay?"

Meanwhile Mazeroux continued:

"She said, you know, that she would try to kill herself. But it must have taken a good amount of pluck."

"But how did she do it?" Perenna asked.

"I'll tell you another time. They're calling me. Whatever you do, chief, don't come."

"Yes," he replied firmly, "I'm coming. After all, the least I can do is to be in at the death, seeing that it was I who found the scent. But don't be afraid. I shall keep in the background."

"Then hurry, chief. We're delivering the attack in ten minutes."

"I'll be with you before that."

He quickly hung up the receiver and turned on his heel to leave the telephone-box. The next moment he had flung himself against the farther wall. Just as he was about to pass out he had heard something click above his head and he barely had the time to leap back and escape being struck by an iron curtain which fell in front of him with a terrible thud.

Another second and the huge mass would have crushed him. He could feel it whizzing by his head. And he had never before experienced the anguish of danger so intensely. After a moment of genuine fright, in which he stood as if petrified, with his brain in a whirl, he recovered his coolness and threw himself upon the obstacle. But it at once appeared to him that the obstacle was insurmountable.

It was a heavy metal panel, not made of plates or lathes fastened one to the other, but formed of a solid slab, massive, firm and strong, and covered with the sheen of time, darkened here and there with patches of rust. On either side and at the top and bottom the edges of the panel fitted in a narrow groove which covered them hermetically.

He was a prisoner. In a sudden fit of rage he banged at the metal with his fists. He remembered that Mlle. Levasseur was in the study. If she had not yet left the room—and surely she could not have left it when the thing happened—she would hear the noise. She was bound to hear it. She would be sure to come back, give the alarm and rescue him.

He listened. He shouted. No reply. His voice died away against the walls and ceiling of the box in which he was shut up; and he felt that the whole house—drawing-rooms, staircases, and passages—remained deaf to his appeal.

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And yet . . . and yet . . . Mlle. Levasseur——

"What does it mean?" he muttered. "What can it all mean?"

And motionless now and silent, he thought once more of the girl's strange attitude, of her distraught face, of her haggard eyes. And he also began to wonder what accident had released the mechanism which had hurled the formidable iron curtain upon him, craftily and ruthlessly.

CHAPTER VII

THE MAN WITH THE EBONY WALKING-STICK.

A GROUP consisting of Deputy Chief Detective Weber, Chief Inspector Ancenis, Sergeant Mazeroux, three inspectors, and the Neuilly Commissary of Police stood outside the gate of number eight Boulevard Richard-Wallace.

Mazeroux was watching the Avenue de Madrid, by which Don Luis would have to come, and began to wonder what had happened; for half an hour had passed since the telephone conversation, and Mazeroux could find no further pretext for delaying the work.

"It's time to make a move," said Weber. "The housekeeper is making signals to us from the window; the fellow's dressing."

"Why not nab him when he comes out?" objected Mazeroux. "We shall capture him in a moment."

"And, if he gets away by another outlet which we don't know of?" said the deputy chief. "You have to be careful with these fellows. No; let's beard him in his den. It's more certain."

"Still——"

"What's the matter with you, Mazeroux?" asked the deputy chief, taking him on one side. "Don't you see that our men are getting restive? They're afraid of this fellow. There's only one way, which is to set them on him as if he were a wild beast. Besides, the business must be finished by the time the Prefect comes."

"Is he coming?"

"Yes. He wants to see things for himself. The whole affair interests him enormously. So, forward! Are you ready, men? I'm going to ring."

The bell sounded; and the housekeeper at once came and half opened the gate.

Although the orders were to observe great quiet, so as not to alarm the enemy too soon, the fear which he inspired was so intense that there was a general rush; and all the detectives crowded into the courtyard, ready for the fight. But a window opened, and some one cried from the second floor—"What's happening?"

The deputy chief did not reply. Two detectives, the Chief Inspector, the Commissary and himself entered the house, while the others remained in the courtyard and made any attempt at flight impossible.

The meeting took place on the first floor. The man had come down, fully dressed, with his hat on his head; and the deputy chief roared:

"Stop! Hands up! Are you Hubert Lautier?"

The man seemed disconcerted. Five revolvers were leveled at him. And yet no sign of fear showed in his face; and he simply said:

"What do you want, monsieur? What are you here for?"

"We are here in the name of the law, with a warrant for your arrest."

"A warrant for my arrest?"

"A warrant for the arrest of Hubert Lautier, residing at 8 Boulevard Richard-Wallace."

"But it's absurd!" said the man. "It's incredible! What does it mean? What for?"

They took him by both arms, without his offering the least resistance, pushed him into a fairly large room, containing no furniture but three rush-bottomed chairs, an armchair and a table covered with big books.

"There!" said the deputy chief. "Don't stir. If you attempt to move, so much the worse for you."

The man made no protest. While the two detectives held him by the collar, he seemed to be reflecting, as if he were trying to understand the secret causes of an arrest for which he was totally unprepared. He had an intelligent face, a reddish-brown beard, and a pair of blue-gray eyes which now and then showed a certain hardness of expression behind his glasses. His broad shoulders and powerful neck pointed to physical strength.

"Shall we tie his wrists?" Mazeroux asked the deputy chief.

"One second. The Prefect's coming; I can hear him. Have you searched the man's pockets? Any weapons?"

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"No."

"No flask, no vial? Nothing suspicious?

"No, nothing."

M. Desmalions arrived and, while watching the prisoner's face, talked in a low voice with the deputy chief and received the particulars of the arrest.

"This is good business," he said. "We wanted this. Now that both accomplices are in custody, they will have to speak; and everything will be cleared up. So there was no resistance?"

"None at all, Monsieur le Préfet."

"No matter; we will remain on our guard."

The prisoner had not uttered a word, but still wore a thoughtful look, as if trying to understand the inexplicable events of the last few minutes. Nevertheless, when he realized that the newcomer was none other than the Prefect of Police, he raised his head and looked at M. Desmalions, who asked him—

"It is unnecessary to tell you the cause of your arrest, I presume?"

He replied in a deferential tone:

"Excuse me, Monsieur le Préfet, but I must ask you, on the contrary, to inform me. I have not the least idea of the reason. Your detectives have made a grave mistake which a word, no doubt, will be enough to set right. That word I wish for, I insist upon——"

The Prefect shrugged his shoulders and said——

"You are suspected of taking part in the murder of Fauville the civil engineer and his son Edmond."

"Is Hippolyte dead?"

The cry was spontaneous, almost unconscious; a bewildered cry of dismay from a man moved to the depths of his being. And his dismay was supremely strange, his question, trying to make them believe in his ignorance, supremely unexpected.

"Is Hippolyte dead?"

He repeated the question in a hoarse voice, trembling all over as he spoke.

"Is Hippolyte dead? What are you saying? Is it possible that he can be dead? And how? Murdered? Edmond too?"

The Prefect once more shrugged his shoulders.

"The mere fact of your calling M. Fauville by his Christian name shows that you knew him intimately. And, even if you were not concerned in his murder, it has been mentioned often enough in the newspapers during the last fortnight for you to know of it."

"I never read a newspaper, Monsieur le Préfet."

"What! You mean to tell me——?"

"It may sound improbable, but it is quite true. I lead an industrious life, occupying myself solely with scientific research, in view of a popular work which I am preparing, and I do not take the least part or the least interest in outside things. I defy any one to prove that I have read a newspaper for months and months past. And that is why I am entitled to say that I did not know of Hippolyte Fauville's murder."

"Still, you knew M. Fauville."

"I used to know him, but we quarreled."

"For what reason?"

"Family affairs."

"Family affairs! Were you related, then?"

"Yes. Hippolyte was my cousin."

"Your cousin! M. Fauville was your cousin? But . . . but then. . . Come, let us have the rights of the matter. M. Fauville and his wife were the children of two sisters, Elisabeth and Armande Roussel. Those two sisters had been brought up with a first cousin called Victor."

"Yes; Victor Sauverand, whose grandfather was a Roussel. Victor Sauverand married abroad and had two sons. One of them died fifteen years ago; the other is myself."

M. DESMALIONS gave a start. His excitement was manifest. If this man was telling the truth, if he was really the son of that Victor whose record the police had not yet been able to trace, then, owing to this very fact, since M. Fauville and his son were dead and Mme. Fauville, so to speak, convicted of murder and forfeiting her rights, they had arrested the final heir to Cosmo Mornington. But why, in a moment of madness, had he voluntarily brought this crushing indictment against himself?

He continued:

"My statements seem to surprise you, Monsieur le Préfet. Perhaps they throw a light on the mistake of which I am a victim?"

He expressed himself calmly, with great politeness and in a remarkably well bred voice; and he did not for a moment seem to suspect that his revelations, on the

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contrary, were justifying the measures taken against him.

Without replying to the question, the Prefect of Police asked him—

"So your real name is——?"

"Gaston Sauverand."

"Why do you call yourself Hubert Lautier?"

The man had a second of indecision which did not escape so clear-sighted an observer as M. Desmalions. He swayed from side to side, his eyes flickered and he said——

"That does not concern the police; it concerns no one but myself."

M. Desmalions smiled:

"That is a poor argument. Will you use the same when I ask you why you live in hiding, why you left the Avenue du Roule, where you used to live, without leaving an address behind you, and why you receive your letters at the post-office under initials?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Préfet, those are matters of a private character, which affect only my conscience. You have no right to question me about them."

"That is the exact reply which we are constantly receiving at every moment from your accomplice."

"My accomplice?"

"Yes; Mme. Fauville."

"Mme. Fauville!"

Gaston Sauverand had uttered the same cry as when he heard of the death of the engineer; and his stupefaction seemed even greater, combined as it was with an anguish that distorted his features beyond recognition.

"What? . . . What? . . . What do you say? Marie! . . . No, you don't mean it; it's not true!"

M. Desmalions considered it useless to reply, so absurd and childish was this affectation of knowing nothing about the tragedy on the Boulevard Suchet.

Gaston Sauverand, beside himself, with his eyes starting from his head, muttered:

"Is it true? Is Marie the victim of the same mistake as myself? Perhaps they have arrested her? She, she in prison!"

He raised his clenched fists in a threatening manner against all the unknown enemies by whom he was surrounded, against those who were persecuting him, those who had murdered Hippolyte Fauville and delivered Marie Fauville to the police.

Mazeroux and Chief Inspector Ancenis took hold of him roughly. He made a movement of resistance, as if he intended to thrust back his aggressors. But it was only momentary; and he sank into a chair and covered his face with his hands.

"What a mystery!" he stammered. "I don't understand . . . . I don't understand——"

Weber, who had gone out a few minutes before, returned. M. Desmalions asked—

"Is everything ready?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Préfet; I have had the taxi brought up to the gate, beside your car."

"How many of you are there?"

"Eight. Two detectives have just arrived from the commissary's."

"Have you searched the house?"

"Yes. It's almost empty, however. There's nothing but the indispensable articles of furniture and some bundles of papers in the bedroom."

"Very well. Take him away and keep a sharp look-out."

Gaston Sauverand walked off quietly between the deputy chief and Mazeroux. He turned around in the doorway.

"Monsieur le Préfet, as you are making a search, I entreat you to take care of the papers on the table in my bedroom. They are notes that have cost me a great deal of labor in the small hours of the night. Also——"

He hesitated, obviously embarrassed.

"Well?"

"Well, Monsieur le Préfet, I must tell you . . . something——"

He was looking for his words and seemed to fear the consequences of them at the same time that he uttered them. But he suddenly made up his mind.

"Monsieur le Préfet, there is in this house . . . somewhere . . . a packet of letters which I value more than my life. It is possible that those letters, if misinterpreted, will furnish a weapon against me; but no matter. . . . The great thing is that they should be safe. . . . You will see. . . . They include documents of extreme importance. . . . I entrust them to your keeping . . . to yours alone, Monsieur le Préfet."

"Where are they?"

"The hiding-place is easily found. All you have to do is to go to the garret above my bedroom and press on a nail to the right of the window. It is an apparently

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useless nail, but it controls a hiding-place outside, under the slates of the roof, along the gutter."

He moved away between the two men. The Prefect called them back.

"One second. Mazeroux, go up to the garret and bring me the letters."

Mazeroux went out and returned in a few minutes. He had been unable to work the spring.

The Prefect ordered Chief Inspector Ancenis to go up with Mazeroux and to take the prisoner, who would show them how to open the hiding-place. He himself remained in the room with Weber, awaiting the result of the search, and began to read the titles of the volumes piled upon the table.

They were scientific books, among which he noticed works on chemistry: "Organic Chemistry" and "Chemistry Considered in Its Relations with Electricity." They were all covered with notes in the margins. He was turning over the pages of one of them, when he seemed to hear shouts.

THE Prefect rushed to the door but had not crossed the threshold when a pistol-shot echoed down the staircase and there was a yell of pain.

Immediately after came two more shots, accompanied by cries, the sound of a struggle and yet another shot. . . .

Tearing upstairs four steps at a time, with an agility not to be expected from a man of his build, the Prefect of Police, followed by the deputy chief, covered the second flight and came to a third, which was narrower and steeper. When he reached the bend a man's body staggering above him fell into his arms; it was Mazeroux, wounded.

On the stairs lay another body, lifeless—that of Chief Inspector Ancenis.

Above them, in the frame of a small doorway, stood Gaston Sauverand, with a savage look in his face and his arm outstretched. He fired a fifth shot at random. Then, seeing the Prefect of Police, he took deliberate aim.

The Prefect stared at that terrifying barrel leveled at his face and gave himself up for lost. But, at that exact second, a shot was discharged from behind him, Sauverand's weapon fell from his hand before he was able to fire and the Prefect saw, as in a dream, a man, the man who had saved his life, striding across the Chief Inspector's body, propping Mazeroux against the wall and darting ahead, followed by the detectives. He recognized the man! it was Don Luis Perenna.

DON LUIS stepped briskly into the garret where Sauverand had retreated, but had time only to catch sight of him standing on the window-ledge and leaping into space, from the third floor.

"Has he jumped from there?" cried the Prefect, hastening up. "We shall never capture him alive!"

"Neither alive nor dead, Monsieur le Préfet. See, he's picking himself up. There's a providence which looks after that sort. He's making for the gate. He's hardly limping."

"But where are my men?"

"Why, they're all on the staircase, in the house, brought here by the shots, seeing to the wounded——"

"Oh, the demon!" muttered the Prefect. "He's played a masterly game!"

Gaston Sauverand, in fact, was escaping unmolested.

"Stop him! Stop him!" roared M. Desmalions.

There were two motors standing beside the pavement, which is very wide at this spot; the Prefect's own car and the cab which the deputy chief had provided for the prisoner. The two chauffeurs, sitting on their seats, had noticed nothing of the fight. But they saw Gaston Sauverand's leap into space; and the Prefect's chauffeur, on whose seat a certain number of incriminating articles had been placed, taking out of the heap the first weapon that offered, the ebony walking-stick, bravely rushed at the fugitive.

"Stop him! Stop him!" shouted M. Desmalions.

The encounter took place at the exit from the courtyard. It did not last long. Sauverand flung himself upon his assailant, snatched the stick from him and broke it across his face. Then, without dropping the handle, he ran away, pursued by the other chauffeur and by three detectives who at last appeared from the house. He had thirty yards' start of the detectives, one of whom fired several shots at him without effect.

When M. Desmalions and Weber went downstairs again, they found the Chief Inspector lying on the bed in Gaston Sauverand's room on the second floor, gray in the

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face. He had been hit in the head and was dying. A few minutes later he was dead.

Sergeant Mazeroux, whose wound was only slight, said while it was being dressed that Sauverand had taken the Chief Inspector and himself up to the garret and that, outside the door, he had dipped his hand quickly into an old satchel hanging on the wall among some servants' worn-out aprons and jackets. He drew out a revolver and fired point-blank at the Chief Inspector, who dropped like a log. When seized by Mazeroux, the murderer released himself and fired three bullets, the third of which hit the sergeant in the shoulder.

And so, in a fight in which the police had a band of experienced detectives at their disposal, while the enemy, a prisoner, seemed to possess not the remotest chance of safety, this enemy, by a stratagem of unprecedented daring, had led two of his adversaries aside, disabled both of them, drawn the others into the house and, finding the coast clear, escaped.

M. Desmalions was white with anger and despair. He exclaimed:

"He's tricked us! His letters, his hiding-place, the movable nail were all shams. Oh, the scoundrel!"

He went down to the ground floor and into the courtyard. On the boulevard he met one of the detectives who had given chase to the murderer and who was returning quite out of breath.

"Well?" he asked anxiously.

"Monsieur le Préfet, he turned down the first street, where there was a motor waiting for him. The engine must have been working, for our man outdistanced us at once."

"But what about my car?"

"You see, Monsieur le Préfet, by the time it was started——"

"Was the motor that picked him up a hired one?"

"Yes; a taxi."

"Then we shall find it. The driver will come of his own accord, when he has seen the newspapers."

Weber shook his head.

"Unless the driver is himself a confederate, Monsieur le Préfet. Besides, even if we find the cab, aren't we bound to suppose that Gaston Sauverand will know how to foul the scent? We shall have trouble, Monsieur le Préfet."

"Yes," whispered Don Luis, who had been present at the first investigation and who was left alone for a moment with Mazeroux. "Yes, you will have trouble, especially if you let the people you capture take to their heels. Eh, Mazeroux, what did I tell you last night? But still, what a scoundrel! And he's not alone, Alexandre. I'll answer for it that he has accomplices . . . and not a hundred yards from my house . . . Do you understand? From my house!"

After questioning Mazeroux upon Sauverand's attitude and the other incidents of the arrest, Don Luis went back to the Place du Palais-Bourbon.

THE inquiry which he had to make related to events that were certainly quite as strange as those which he had just witnessed; and, while the part played by Gaston Sauverand in the pursuit of the Mornington inheritance deserved all his attention, the behavior of Mlle. Levasseur puzzled him no less.

He could not forget the cry of terror that escaped the girl while he was telephoning to Mazeroux, nor the scared expression of her face. Now it was impossible to attribute that cry and that expression to anything other than the words which he had uttered in reply to Mazeroux:

"What! Mme. Fauville tried to commit suicide?"

The fact was certain; and the connection between the announcement of the attempt and Mlle. Levasseur's extreme emotion was too obvious for Perenna not to try to draw conclusions.

He went straight to his study and at once examined the arch leading to the telephone-box. This arch, which was about six feet wide and very low, had no door, but merely a velvet hanging, which was nearly always drawn up, leaving the arch uncovered. Under the hanging, among the moldings of the cornice, was a button that had only to be pressed to bring down the iron curtain against which he had thrown himself two hours before.

He worked the catch two or three times over, and his experiments proved to him in the most explicit fashion that the mechanism was in perfect order and unable to act without outside intervention. Was he then to conclude that the girl had wanted to kill him? But what could be her motive?

He was on the point of ringing and sending

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for her, so as to receive the explanation which he was resolved to demand from her. However, the minutes passed and he did not ring. He saw her through the window as she walked slowly across the yard, her body swinging gracefully from her hips. A ray of sunshine lit up the gold of her hair.

All the rest of the morning he lay on a sofa, smoking cigars. He was ill at ease, dissatisfied with himself and with the course of events, not one of which brought him the least glimmer of truth; in fact, all of them seemed to deepen the darkness in which he was battling. Eager to act, the moment he did so he encountered fresh obstacles that paralyzed his powers of action and left him in utter ignorance of the nature of his adversaries.

But, at twelve o'clock, just as he had rung for luncheon, his butler entered the study with a tray in his hand, and exclaimed, with an agitation which showed that the household was aware of Don Luis' ambiguous position—

"Sir, it's the Prefect of Police!"

"Eh?" said Perenna. "Where is he?"

"Downstairs, sir. I did not know what to do, at first . . . and I thought of telling Mlle. Levasseur. But——"

"Are you sure?"

"Here is his card, sir."

Perenna took the card from the tray and read M. Desmalions' name. He went to the window, opened it and with the aid of the overhead mirror looked into the Place du Palais-Bourbon. Half a dozen men were walking about. He recognized them. They were his usual watchers, those whom he had got rid of on the evening before and who had come to resume their observation.

"No others?" he said to himself. "Come, we have nothing to fear and the Prefect of Police has none but the best intentions toward me. It was what I expected; and I think that I was well advised to save his life."

M. Desmalions entered without a word. All that he did was to bend his head slightly, with a movement that might be taken for a bow. As for Weber, who was with him, he did not even give himself the trouble to disguise his feelings toward such a man as Perenna.

Don Luis took no direct notice of this attitude, but, in revenge, ostentatiously omitted to push forward more than one chair. M. Desmalions, however, preferred to walk about the room, with his hands behind his back, as if to continue his reflections before speaking.

The silence was prolonged. Don Luis waited patiently. Then suddenly the Prefect stopped and said—

"When you left the Boulevard Richard-Wallace, monsieur, did you go straight home?"

Don Luis did not demur to this cross-examining manner and answered—

"Yes, Monsieur le Préfet."

"Here, to your study?"

"Here, to my study."

M. Desmalions paused and then went on:

"I left thirty or forty minutes after you and drove to the police office in my car. There I received this express letter. Read it. You will see that it was handed in at the Bourse at half past nine."

Don Luis took the letter and read the following words, written in capital letters:

This is to inform you that Gaston Sauverand, after making his escape, rejoined his accomplice Perenna, who, as you know, is none other than Arsène Lupin. Arsène Lupin gave you Sauverand's address in order to get rid of him and to receive the Mornington inheritance. They were reconciled this morning; and Arsène Lupin suggested a safe hiding-place to Sauverand. It is easy to prove their meeting and their complicity. Sauverand handed Lupin the half of the walking-stick which he had carried away unawares. You will find it under the cushions of a sofa standing between the two windows of Perenna's study.

Don Luis shrugged his shoulders. The letter was absurd, for he had not once left his study. He folded it up quietly and handed it to the Prefect of Police without comment. He was resolved to let M. Desmalions take the initiative in the conversation.

The Prefect asked—

"What is your reply to the accusation?"

"None, Monsieur le Préfet."

"Still, it is quite plain and easy to prove or disprove."

"Very easy indeed, Monsieur le Préfet; the sofa is there, between the windows."

M. Desmalions waited two or three seconds and then walked to the sofa and moved the cushions. Under one of them lay the handle-end of the walking-stick.

DON LUIS could not repress a gesture of amazement and anger. He had not for a second contemplated the possibility of such a miracle; and it took him unawares. However, he

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mastered himself. After all, there was nothing to prove that this half of a walking-stick was really that which had been seen in Gaston Sauverand's hands and which Sauverand had carried away by mistake.

"I have the other half on me," said the Prefect of Police, replying to the unspoken objection. "Deputy Chief Weber himself picked it up on the Boulevard Richard-Wallace. Here it is."

He produced it from the inside pocket of his overcoat and tried it. The ends of the two pieces fitted exactly.

There was a fresh pause. Perenna was confused, as were those, invariably, upon whom he himself used to inflict this kind of defeat and humiliation. He could not get over it. By what prodigy had Gaston Sauverand managed, in that short space of twenty minutes, to enter the house and make his way into this room? Even the theory of an accomplice living in the house did not do much to make the phenomenon easier to understand.

"It upsets all my calculations," he thought, "and I shall have to go through the mill this time. I was able to baffle Mme. Fauville's accusation and to foil the trick of the turquoise. But M. Desmalions will never admit that this is a similar attempt and that Gaston Sauverand has tried, as Marie Fauville did, to get me out of the way by compromising me and procuring my arrest."

"Well," exclaimed M. Desmalions impatiently, "answer! Defend yourself!"

"No, Monsieur le Préfet, it is not for me to defend myself."

M. Desmalions stamped his foot and growled—

"In that case . . . in that case . . . since you confess . . . since——"

He put his hand on the latch of the window, ready to open it. A whistle, and the detectives would burst in and all would be over.

"Shall I have your inspectors called, Monsieur le Préfet?" asked Don Luis.

M. Desmalions did not reply. He let go the window-latch and started walking about the room again. And suddenly, while Perenna was wondering why he still hesitated, for the second time the Prefect planted himself in front of him and said:

"And, suppose I looked upon the incident of the walking-stick as not having occurred, or rather as an incident which, while doubtless proving the treachery of your servants, can not compromise yourself? Suppose I took only the services which you have already rendered us into consideration? In a word, suppose I left you free?"

Perenna could not help smiling. Notwithstanding the affair of the walking-stick and though appearances were all against him, at the moment when everything seemed to be going wrong, things were taking the course which he had prophesied from the start and which he had mentioned to Mazeroux during the inquiry on the Boulevard Suchet. They wanted him.

"Free?" he asked. "No more supervision? Nobody shadowing my movements?"

"Nobody."

"And what if the press campaign around my name continues, if the papers succeed, by means of certain pieces of tittle-tattle, of certain coincidences, in creating a public outcry, if they call for measures against me?"

"Those measures shall not be taken."

"Then I have nothing to fear?"

"Nothing."

"Will M. Weber abandon his prejudices against me?"

"At any rate he will act as if he did, won't you, Weber?"

The deputy chief uttered a few grunts which might be taken as an expression of assent; and Don Luis at once exclaimed—

"In that case, Monsieur le Préfet, I am sure of gaining the victory and of gaining it in accordance with the wishes and requirements of the authorities."

And so, by a sudden change in the situation, after a series of exceptional circumstances, the police themselves, bowing before Don Luis Perenna's superior qualities of mind, acknowledging all that he had already done and foreseeing all that he would be able to do, decided to back him up, begging for his assistance and offering him, so to speak, the command of affairs.

It was a flattering compliment. Was it addressed only to Don Luis Perenna? And had Lupin, the terrible, undaunted Lupin, no right to claim his share? Was it possible to believe that M. Desmalions, in his heart of hearts, did not admit the identity of the two persons?

Nothing in the Prefect's attitude gave any clue to his secret thoughts. He was suggesting to Don Luis Perenna one of

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those compacts which the police are often obliged to conclude in order to gain their ends. The compact was concluded; and no more was said upon the subject.

"Do you want any particulars of me?" asked the Prefect of Police.

"Yes, Monsieur le Préfet. The papers spoke of a notebook found in poor Inspector Vérot's pocket. Did the notebook contain a clue of any kind?"

"No. Personal notes, lists of disbursements—that's all. Wait! I was forgetting; there was a photograph of a woman, about which I have not yet been able to obtain the least information. Besides, I don't suppose that it bears upon the case and I have not sent it to the newspapers. Look, here it is."

Perenna took the photograph which the Prefect handed him and gave a start that did not escape M. Desmalions' eye.

"Do you know the lady?"

"No. No, Monsieur le Préfet. I thought I did; but no, there's merely a resemblance . . . a family likeness, which I will verify if you can leave the photograph with me till this evening."

"Till this evening, yes. When you have done with it, give it back to Sergeant Mazeroux, whom I will order to work in concert with you in everything that relates to the Mornington case."

The interview was now over. The Prefect went away. Don Luis saw him to the door. As M. Desmalions was about to go down the steps, he turned and said simply:

"You saved my life this morning. But for you, that scoundrel Sauverand——"

"Oh, Monsieur le Préfet!" said Don Luis, modestly protesting.

"Yes, I know, you are in the habit of doing that sort of thing. All the same, you must accept my thanks."

And the Prefect of Police made a bow such as he would really have made to Don Luis Perenna, the Spanish-Peruvian noble, the hero of the Foreign Legion. As for Weber, he put his two hands in his pockets, walked past with the look of a muzzled mastiff and gave his enemy a glance of fierce hatred.

"By Jupiter!" thought Don Luis. "There's a fellow who won't miss me when he gets the chance to shoot!"

Looking through a window, he saw M. Desmalions' motor-car drive off. The detectives fell in behind the deputy chief and left the Place du Palais-Bourbon. The siege was raised.

"AND now to work!" said Don Luis. "My hands are free, and we shall make things hum."

He called the butler.

"Serve luncheon; and ask Mlle. Levasseur to come and speak to me immediately after."

He went to the dining-room and sat down, placing on the table the photograph which M. Desmalions had left behind; and, bending over it, he examined it attentively. It was a little faded, a little worn, as photographs have a tendency to become when they lie about in pocket-books or among papers; but the picture was quite clear. It was the radiant picture of a young woman in evening dress, with bare arms and shoulders, with flowers and leaves in her hair and a smile upon her face.

"Mlle. Levasseur, Mlle. Levasseur!" he said. "Is it possible?"

In a corner was a half-obliterated and hardly visible signature. He made out, "Florence;" the girl's name, no doubt. And he repeated:

"Mlle. Levasseur, Florence Levasseur. . . How did her photograph come to be in Inspector Vérot's pocket-book? And what is the connection between this adventure and the reader of the Hungarian Count from whom I took over the house?"

He remembered the incident of the iron curtain. He remembered the article in the *Écho de France*, an article aimed against him, of which he had found the rough draft in his own courtyard. And, above all, he thought of the problem of that broken walking-stick conveyed into his study.

And, while his mind was striving to read these events clearly, while he tried to settle the part played by Mlle. Levasseur, his eyes remained fixed upon the photograph and he gazed absent-mindedly at the pretty lines of the mouth, the charming smile, the graceful curve of the neck, the admirable sweep of the shoulders.

The door opened suddenly and Mlle. Levasseur burst into the room. Perenna, who had dismissed the butler, was raising to his lips a glass of water which he had just filled for himself. She sprang forward, seized his arm, snatched the glass from him and flung it on the carpet, where it smashed to pieces.

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"Have you drunk any of it? Have you drunk any of it?" she gasped in a choking voice.

He replied:

"No, not yet. Why?"

She stammered—

"The water in that bottle . . . the water in that bottle. . ."

"Well?"

"It's poisoned!"

He leaped from his chair and in his turn gripped her arm fiercely.

"What's that? Poisoned? Are you certain? Speak!"

In spite of his usual self-control, he was this time thoroughly alarmed. Knowing the terrible effects of the poison employed by the miscreants whom he was attacking, recalling the corpse of Inspector Vérot, the corpses of Hippolyte Fauville and his son, he knew that, trained though he was to resist comparatively large doses of poison, he could not have escaped the deadly action of this. It was a poison that did not forgive, that killed, surely and fatally.

The girl was silent. He raised his voice in command.

"Answer me! Are you certain?"

"No . . . It was an idea that entered my head . . . A presentiment . . . Certain coincidences. . ."

It was as if she regretted her words and now tried to withdraw them.

"Come, come!" he cried. "I want to know the truth. You're not certain that the water in this bottle is poisoned?"

"No . . . It's possible——"

"Still, just now——"

"I thought so. . . But no . . . no!"

"It's easy to make sure," said Perenna, putting out his hand for the water-bottle.

She was quicker than he, seized it and with one blow broke it against the table.

"What are you doing?" he said angrily.

"I made a mistake. And so there is no need to attach any importance——"

Don Luis hurriedly left the dining-room. By his orders the water which he drank was drawn from a filter that stood in a pantry at the end of the passage leading from the dining-room to the kitchens and beyond. He ran to it and took from a shelf a bowl which he filled with water from the filter. Then, continuing to follow the passage, which at this spot branched off toward the yard, he called Mirza, the puppy, who was playing by the stables.

"Here!" he said, putting the bowl in front of her.

The puppy began to drink. But she stopped almost at once and stood motionless, with her paws tense and stiff. A shiver passed through the little body. The dog gave a hoarse groan, spun around two or three times and fell.

"She's dead," he said, after touching the animal.

Mlle. Levasseur had joined him. He turned to her and rapped out:

"You were right about the poison . . . and you knew it. . . . How did you know it?"

All out of breath, she checked the beating of her heart and answered:

"I saw the other puppy drinking, in the pantry. She's dead. I told the coachman and the chauffeur. They're over there, in the stable. And I ran to warn you."

"In that case there was no doubt about it. Why did you say that you were not certain that the water was poisoned, when——"

The chauffeur and the coachman were coming out of the stable. Leading the girl away, Perenna said:

"We must talk about this. We'll go to your rooms."

They went back to the bend in the passage. Near the pantry where the filter was, another passage ran, ending in a flight of three steps, with a door at the top of the steps. Perenna opened this door. It was the entrance to the rooms occupied by Mlle. Levasseur. They went into a sitting-room.

Don Luis closed the entrance-door and the door of the sitting-room.

"And now," he said, in a resolute tone, "you and I will have an explanation."

CHAPTER VIII

SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS, VOL. VIII.

TWO lodges, belonging to the same old-time period as the house itself, stood at the extreme right and left of the low wall that separated the front courtyard from the Place du Palais-Bourbon. These lodges were joined to the main building, situated at the back of the courtyard, by a series of out-houses. On one side were the coach-houses, stables, harness-rooms and garage, with the porter's lodge at the end; on the other side, the washhouses, kitchens and

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offices, ending in the lodge occupied by Mlle. Levasseur.

This lodge had only a ground floor, consisting of a dark entrance-hall and one large room, most of which served as a sitting-room, while the rest, arranged as a bedroom, was really only a sort of alcove. A curtain hid the bed and wash-stand. There were two windows looking out on the Place du Palais-Bourbon.

It was the first time that Don Luis had set foot in Mlle. Levasseur's room. Engrossed though he was with other matters, he felt its charm. It was very simply furnished: some old mahogany chairs and arm-chairs, a plain Empire writing-table, a round table with one heavy, massive leg and some book-shelves. But the bright color of the linen curtains enlivened the room. On the walls hung reproductions of famous pictures, drawings of sunny buildings and landscapes, Italian villas, Sicilian temples. . . .

The girl remained standing. She had resumed her composure and her face had taken on the enigmatical expression so difficult to fathom, especially as she had assumed a deliberate air of dejection, which Perenna guessed was intended to hide her excitement and alertness, together with the tumultuous feelings which even she had great difficulty in controlling.

Her eyes looked neither timorous nor defiant. It really seemed as if she had nothing to fear from the explanation.

Don Luis kept silent for some little time. It was strange and it annoyed him to feel it, but he experienced a certain embarrassment in the presence of this woman, against whom he was inwardly bringing the most serious charges. And, not daring to put them into words, not daring to say plainly what he thought, he began—

"You know what happened in this house this morning?"

"This morning?"

"Yes; when I had finished speaking on the telephone."

"I know now. I heard it from the servants, from the butler."

"Not before?"

"How could I have known earlier?"

She was lying. It was impossible that she should be speaking the truth. And yet in what a calm voice she had replied!

He went on:

"I will tell you, in a few words, what happened. I was leaving the telephone-box when the iron curtain, concealed in the upper part of the wall, fell in front of me. After making sure that there was nothing to be done, I simply resolved, as I had the telephone by me, to call in the assistance of one of my friends. I rang up Major d'Astrignac. He came at once and, with the help of the butler, let me out. Is that what you heard?"

"Yes, monsieur. I had gone to my room, which explains why I knew nothing of the incident nor of Major d'Astrignac's visit."

"Very well. It appears, however, from what I learned when I was released, that the butler and, for that matter, everybody in the house, including yourself, knew of the existence of that iron curtain."

"Certainly."

"And how did you know it?"

"Through Count Malonyi. He told me that, during the Revolution, his great-grandmother on his mother's side, who then occupied this house and whose husband was guillotined, remained hidden in that recess for thirteen months. At that time the curtain was covered with woodwork similar to that of the room."

"It's a pity that I wasn't informed of it, for after all I was very nearly crushed to death."

This possibility did not seem to move the girl. She said:

"It would be a good thing to look at the mechanism and see why it became unfastened. It's all very old and works badly."

"The mechanism works perfectly. I tested it. An accident is not enough to account for it."

"Who could have done it, if it was not an accident?"

"Some enemy whom I am unable to name."

"He would have been seen."

"There was only one person who could have seen him; yourself. You happened to pass through my study as I was telephoning and I heard your exclamation of fright at the news about Mme. Fauville."

"Yes; it gave me a shock. I pity the woman so very much, whether she is guilty or not."

"And, as you were close to the arch, with your hand within reach of the spring, the presence of an evil-doer would not have escaped your notice."

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She did not lower her eyes. A slight flush overspread her face as she said—

"Yes, I should at least have met him; for, from what I gather, I went out a few seconds before the accident."

"Quite so," he said. "But what is so curious and unlikely is that you did not hear the loud noise of the curtain falling, nor my shouts and all the uproar I created."

"I must have closed the door of the study by that time. I heard nothing."

"Then I am bound to presume that there was some one hidden in my study at that moment and that this person is a confederate of the ruffians who committed the two murders on the Boulevard Suchet; for the Prefect of Police has just discovered under the cushions of my sofa the half of a walking-stick belonging to one of those ruffians."

She wore an air of great surprise. This new incident seemed really to be quite unknown to her. He came nearer and, looking her straight in the eyes, said—

"You must at least admit that it's strange."

"What's strange?"

"This series of events, all directed against me. Yesterday, that draft of a letter which I found in the courtyard, the draft of the article published in the *Écho de France*. This morning, first the crash of the iron curtain just as I was passing under it, next the discovery of that walking-stick and then, a moment ago, the poisoned water-bottle——"

She nodded her head and murmured:

"Yes, yes . . . There is an array of facts——"

"An array of facts so significant," he said, completing her sentence meaningly, "as to remove the least shadow of doubt. I can feel absolutely certain of the immediate intervention of my most ruthless and daring enemy. His presence here is proved. He is ready to act at any moment.

"His object is plain," explained Don Luis. "By means of the anonymous article, by means of that half of the walking-stick he meant to compromise me and have me arrested. By the fall of the curtain he meant to kill me or at least to keep me imprisoned for some hours. And now it's poison, the cowardly poison which kills by stealth, which they put in my water today and which they will put in my food tomorrow. And next it will be the dagger and then the revolver and then the rope, no matter which, so long as I disappear; for that is what they want: to get rid of me."

"I am the adversary, I am the man they're afraid of, the man who will discover the secret one day and pocket the millions which they're after. I am the interloper. I stand mounting guard over the Morrington inheritance. It's my turn to suffer. Four victims are dead already. I shall be the fifth. So Gaston Sauverand has decided—Gaston Sauverand or some one else who's managing the business."

Perenna's eyes narrowed.

"The accomplice is here, in this house, in the midst of everything, by my side. He is lying in wait for me. He is following every step I take. He is living in my shadow. He is waiting for the time and place to strike me. Well, I have had enough of it. I want to know, I will know and I shall know. Who is he?"

THE girl had moved back a little way and was leaning against the round table. He took another step forward and, with his eyes still fixed on hers, looking in that immobile face for a quivering sign of fear or anxiety, he repeated with greater violence:

"Who is the accomplice? Who in the house has sworn to take my life?"

"I don't know," she said, "I don't know. . . . Perhaps there is no plot, as you think, but just a series of chance coincidences——"

He felt inclined to say to her, with his habit of adopting a familiar tone toward those whom he regarded as his adversaries:

"You're lying, dearie, you're lying. The accomplice is yourself, my beauty. You alone overheard my conversation on the telephone with Mazeroux, you alone can have gone to Gaston Sauverand's assistance, waited for him in a motor at the corner of the boulevard and arranged with him to bring the top half of the walking-stick here. You're the beauty that wants to kill me, for some reason which I do not know. The hand that strikes me in the dark is yours, sweetheart."

But it was impossible for him to treat her in this fashion; and he was so much exasperated at not being able to proclaim his certainty in words of anger and indignation that he took her fingers and twisted them violently, while his look and his whole attitude accused the girl even more forcibly than the bitterest words.

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He mastered himself and released his grip. The girl freed herself with a quick movement indicating repulsion and hatred. Don Luis said:

"Very well. I will question the servants. If necessary, I shall dismiss any whom I suspect."

"No, don't do that," she said eagerly. "You mustn't. I know them all."

Was she going to defend them? Was she yielding to a scruple of conscience at the moment when her obstinacy and duplicity were on the point of causing her to sacrifice a set of servants whose conduct she knew to be beyond reproach? Don Luis received the impression that the glance which she threw at him contained an appeal for pity. But pity for whom? For the others? Or for herself?

They were silent for a long time. Don Luis, standing a few steps away from her, thought of the photograph and was surprised to find in the real woman all the beauty of the portrait, all that beauty which he had not observed hitherto, but which now struck him as a revelation. The golden hair shone with a brilliancy till now unsuspected by him. The mouth wore a less happy expression; perhaps a rather bitter expression, but one which nevertheless retained the shape of the smile. The curve of the chin, the grace of the neck revealed above the dip of the linen collar, the line of the shoulders, the position of the arms and of the hands resting on her knees: all this was charming and very gentle and, in a manner, very seemly and reassuring. Was it possible that this woman should be a murderess, a poisoner?

He said:

"I forget what you told me that your Christian name was. But the name you gave me was not the right one."

"Yes, it was," she said.

"Your name is Florence—Florence Levasseur."

She started.

"What! Who told you? Florence! How do you know?"

"Here is your photograph, with your name on it, almost illegible."

"Oh!" she said, amazed at seeing the picture. "I can't believe it! Where does it come from? Where did you get it from?" And suddenly: "It was the Prefect of Police who gave it to you, was it not? Yes, it was he; I'm sure of it. I am sure that this photograph is to identify me and that they are looking for me—for me too. . . And it's you again, it's you again——"

"Have no fear," he said. "The print wants only a few touches to alter the face beyond recognition. I will make them. Have no fear."

She was no longer listening to him. She gazed at the photograph with all her concentrated attention and murmured:

"I was twenty years old. . . . I was living in Italy. . . . Dear me, how happy I was on the day when it was taken! And how happy I was when I saw my portrait! . . . I used to think myself pretty in those days. . . . And then it disappeared. . . . It was stolen from me, like other things that had already been stolen from me, at that time——"

And, sinking her voice still lower, speaking her name as if she were addressing some other woman, some unhappy friend, she repeated:

"Florence. . . . Florence——"

Tears streamed down her cheeks.

"She is not one of those who kill," thought Don Luis. "I can't believe that she is an accomplice. And yet . . . and yet——"

He moved away from her and walked across the room, from the window to the door. The drawings of Italian landscapes on the wall attracted his attention. Next he read the titles of the books on the shelves. They represented French and foreign works, novels, plays, essays, volumes of poetry, pointing to a really cultivated and varied taste.

He saw Racine next to Dante, Stendhal near Edgar Allan Poe, Montaigne between Goethe and Virgil. And suddenly, with that extraordinary faculty which enabled him, in any collection of objects, to perceive details which he did not at once take in, he noticed that one of the volumes of an English edition of Shakespeare's Works did not look exactly like the others. There was something peculiar about the red-morocco back, something stiff, without the cracks and creases which show that a book has been used.

It was the eighth volume. He took it out, taking care not to be heard.

He was not mistaken. The volume was a sham, a mere set of boards surrounding a hollow space that formed a box and thus provided a regular hiding-place; and, inside this book, he caught sight of plain

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note-paper, envelopes of different kinds and some sheets of ordinary ruled paper, all of the same size and looking as if they had been taken from a writing-pad.

And the appearance of these ruled sheets struck him at once. He remembered the look of the paper on which the article for the *Echo de France* had been drafted. The ruling was identical; and the shape and size appeared to be the same.

On lifting the sheets one after the other, he saw, on the last but one, a series of lines consisting of words and figures in pencil, like notes hurriedly jotted down.

He read:

House on the Boulevard Suchet.
First letter. Night of 15 April.
Second. Night of 25th.
Third and fourth. Nights of 5 and 15 May.
Fifth and explosion. Night of 25 May.

Fauville's house!

And, while noting first that the date of the first night was that of the actual day and next that all these dates followed each other at intervals of ten days, he remarked the resemblance between the writing and the writing of the rough draft.

The draft was in a notebook in his pocket. He was therefore in a position to verify the similarity of the two handwritings and of the two ruled sheets of paper. He took his notebook and opened it. The draft was not there.

"Gad," he snarled, "but this is a little too much!"

And at the same time he remembered clearly that when he was telephoning to Mazeroux in the morning, the notebook was in the pocket of his overcoat and that he had left his overcoat on a chair near the telephone-box. Now at that moment Mlle. Levasseur, for no reason, was roaming about the study. What was she doing there?

"Oh, the play-actress!" thought Perenna, raging within himself. "She was humbugging me. Her tears, her air of frankness, her tender memories! All bunkum! She belongs to the same stock and the same gang as Marie Fauville and Gaston Sauverand. Like them, she is an accomplished liar and actress from her slightest gesture down to the least inflexion of her innocent voice."

He was on the point of having it all out with her and confounding her. This time the proof was undeniable. Dreading an inquiry which might have brought the facts home to her, she had been unwilling to leave the draft of the article in the adversary's hands.

How could he doubt from this moment that she was the accomplice employed by the people who were working the Mornington affair and trying to get rid of him? Had he not every right to suppose that she was directing the sinister gang and that, commanding the others with her audacity and her intelligence, she was leading them toward the obscure goal at which they were aiming?

For, after all, she was free, entirely free in her actions and movements. The windows opening on the Place du Palais-Bourbon gave her every facility for leaving the house under cover of the darkness and coming in again unknown to anybody.

It was therefore quite possible that, on the night of the double crime, she was among the murderers of Hippolyte Fauville and his son. It was quite possible that she had taken part in the murders and even that the poison had been injected into the victims by her hand, by that little white, slender hand which he saw resting against the golden hair.

A shudder passed through him. He had softly put back the paper in the book, restored the book to its place and moved nearer to the girl.

All of a sudden he caught himself studying the lower part of her face, the shape of her jaw! Yes, that was what he was making every effort to guess, under the curve of the cheeks and behind the veil of the lips. Almost against his will, with personal anguish mingled with torturing curiosity, he stared and stared, ready to force open those closed lips and to seek the reply to the terrifying problem that suggested itself to him.

Those teeth, those teeth which he did not see, were not they the teeth that had left the incriminating marks in the fruit? Which were the teeth of the tiger, the teeth of the wild beast—these, or the other woman's?

It was an absurd supposition, because the marks had been recognized as made by Marie Fauville. But was the absurdity of a supposition a sufficient reason for discarding it?

Himself astonished at the feelings that agitated him, fearing lest he should betray himself, he preferred to cut short the interview and, going up to the girl, he said to

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her, in an imperious and aggressive tone:

"I wish all the servants in the house to be discharged. You will give them their wages, pay them such compensation as they ask for and see that they leave today, definitely. Another staff of servants will arrive this evening. You will be here to receive them."

She made no reply. He went away, taking with him the uncomfortable impression that had lately marked his relations with Florence. The atmosphere between them always remained heavy and oppressive. Their words never seemed to express the private thoughts of either of them; and their actions did not correspond with the words spoken. Did not the circumstances logically demand the immediate dismissal of Florence Levasseur as well? Yet Don Luis did not so much as think of it.

RETURNING to his study, he at once rang up Mazeroux and, lowering his voice so as not to let it reach the next room, he said—

"Is that you, Mazeroux?"

"Yes."

"Has the Prefect placed you at my disposal?"

"Yes."

"Well, tell him that I have discharged all my servants and that I have given you their names and instructed you to have an active watch kept on them. We must look among them for Sauverand's accomplice. Another thing: ask the Prefect to give you and me permission to spend the night at Hippolyte Fauville's house."

"Nonsense! At the house on the Boulevard Suchet?"

"Yes; I have every reason to believe that something's going to happen there."

"What sort of thing?"

"I don't know. But something is bound to take place. And I insist on being at it. Is it arranged?"

"Right, chief. Unless you hear to the contrary, I'll meet you at nine o'clock this evening on the Boulevard Suchet."

Perenna did not see Mlle. Levasseur again that day. He went out in the course of the afternoon and called at a registry office, where he chose some servants—a chauffeur, a coachman, a footman, a cook and so on. Then he went to a photographer, who made a new copy of Mlle. Levasseur's photograph. Don Luis had this touched up and faked it himself, so that the Prefect of Police should not perceive the substitution of one set of features for another.

He dined at a restaurant and at nine o'clock joined Mazeroux on the Boulevard Suchet.

Since the Fauville murders the house had been left in the charge of the porter. All the rooms and all the locks had been sealed up, except the inner door of the workroom, of which the police kept the keys for the purposes of the inquiry.

The big study looked as it did before, though the papers had been removed and put away and there were no books and pamphlets left on the writing-table. A layer of dust, clearly visible by the electric light, covered its black leather and the surrounding mahogany.

"Well, Alexandre, old man," cried Don Luis, when they had made themselves comfortable, "what do you say to this? It's rather impressive, being here again, what? But this time no barricading of doors, no bolts, eh? If anything's going to happen, on this night of the fifteenth of April, we'll put nothing in our friends' way. They shall have full and entire liberty. It's up to them, this time."

Though joking, Don Luis was nevertheless singularly impressed, as he himself said, by the terrible recollection of the two crimes which he had been unable to prevent and by the haunting vision of the two dead bodies. And he also remembered with real emotion the implacable duel which he had fought with Mme. Fauville, the woman's despair and her arrest.

"Tell me about her," he said to Mazeroux. "So she tried to kill herself?"

"Yes," said Mazeroux; "a thorough-going attempt, though she had to make it in a manner which she must have hated. She hanged herself in strips of linen torn from her sheets and underclothing and twisted together. She had to be restored by artificial respiration. She is out of danger now, I believe, but she is never left alone, for she swore she would do it again."

"She has made no confession?"

"No. She persists in proclaiming her innocence."

"And what do they think at the Public Prosecutor's? At the Prefect's?"

"Why should they change their opinion, chief? The inquiries confirm every one of the charges brought against her; and in

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particular it has been proved beyond the possibility of dispute that she alone can have touched the apple and that she can have touched it only between eleven o'clock at night and seven o'clock in the morning. Now the apple bears the undeniable marks of her teeth. Would you admit that there are two sets of jaws in the world that leave the same identical imprint?"

"No, no!" said Don Luis, who was thinking of Florence Levasseur. "No; the argument allows of no discussion. We have here a fact that is clear as daylight; and the imprint is almost tantamount to a discovery in the act. But then how, in the midst of all this, are we to explain the presence of——"

"Whom, chief?"

"Nobody. . . . I had an idea worrying me. . . . Besides, you see, in all this there are so many unnatural things, such queer coincidences and inconsistencies, that I dare not count on a certainty which the reality of tomorrow may destroy."

They went on talking for some time, studying the question in all its bearings.

At midnight, they switched off the electric light in the chandelier and arranged that each should go to sleep in turn.

And the hours went by as they had done when the two sat up before, with the same sounds of belated carriages and motor-cars, the same railway-whistles, the same silence.

THE night passed without alarm or incident of any kind. At daybreak the life out of doors was resumed; and Don Luis during his waking hours had not heard a sound in the room except the monotonous snoring of his companion.

"Can I have been mistaken?" he wondered. "Did the clue in that volume of Shakespeare mean something else? Or did it refer to events of last year, events that took place on the dates set down?"

In spite of everything, he felt overcome by a strange uneasiness as the dawn began to glimmer through the half-closed shutters. A fortnight before, nothing had happened either to warn him; and yet there were two victims lying near him when he awoke.

At seven o'clock he called out—

"Alexandre!"

"Eh? What is it, chief?"

"You're not dead?"

"What's that? Dead? No, chief; why should I be?"

"Quite sure?"

"Well, that's a good one! Why not you?"

"Oh, it'll be my turn soon! Considering the intelligence of those scoundrels, there's no reason why they should go on missing me."

They waited an hour longer. Then Perenna opened a window and threw back the shutter.

"Well, Alexandre, perhaps you're not dead, but you're certainly very green."

Mazeroux gave a wry laugh.

"Upon my word, chief, I confess that I had a bad time of it when I was keeping watch while you were asleep."

"Were you afraid?"

"To the roots of my hair. I kept on thinking that something was going to happen. But you, too, chief, don't look as if you had been enjoying yourself. Were you also——"

He interrupted himself, on seeing an expression of unbounded astonishment on Don Luis' face.

"What's the matter, chief?"

"Look . . . on the table . . . That letter——"

He looked. There was a letter on the writing-table, or rather a postal-card, the edges of which had been torn along the perforation-marks; and they saw the outside of it, with the address, the stamp and the postmarks.

"Did you put that there, Alexandre?"

"You're joking, chief. You know it can only have been you."

"It can only have been I . . . And yet it was not I."

"But then——"

Don Luis took the postal-card and, on examining it, found that the address and the postmarks had been scratched out so as to make it impossible to read the name of the addressee or where he lived, but that the place of posting was quite clear, as was the date—Paris, 4 January, 19—.

"So the letter is three and a half months old," said Don Luis.

He turned to the inside of the letter. It contained a dozen lines. He at once exclaimed—

"Hippolyte Fauville's signature!"

"And his handwriting," observed Mazeroux. "I can tell it at a glance. There's no mistake about that. What does it all mean? A letter written by Hippolyte Fauville three months before his death?"

Perenna read aloud:

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"MY DEAR OLD FRIEND:

"I can only, alas, confirm what I wrote to you the other day: the plot is thickening around me! I do not yet know what their plan is and still less how they mean to put it into execution; but everything warns me that the end is at hand. I can see it in her eyes. How strangely she looks at me sometimes!

"Oh, the shame of it! Who would ever have thought her capable of it?

"I am a very unhappy man, my dear friend."

"And it's signed 'Hippolyte Fauville'," Mazeroux continued, "and I declare to you that it's actually in his hand . . . written on the fourth of January of this year to a friend whose name we don't know, though we shall dig him out somehow, that I'll swear. And this friend will certainly give us the proofs we want."

Mazeroux was becoming excited.

"Proofs! Why, we don't need them! They're here! M. Fauville himself supplies them: 'The end is at hand. I can see it in her eyes.' 'Her' refers to his wife, to Marie Fauville; and the husband's evidence confirms all that we knew against her. What do you say, chief?"

"You're right," replied Perenna absentmindedly; "you're right; the letter is final. Only——"

"Only what?"

"Who the devil can have brought it? Somebody must have entered the room last night while we were here. Is it possible? For, after all, we should have heard. That's what astounds me."

"It certainly looks like it."

"Just so. It was a queer enough job a fortnight ago. But, still, we were in the passage outside, while they were at work in here; whereas this time we were here, both of us, close to this very table. And, on this table, which had not the least scrap of paper on it last night, we find this letter in the morning."

A careful inspection of the place gave them no clue to put them on the track. They went through the house from top to bottom and ascertained for certain that there was no one there in hiding. Besides, supposing that any one was hiding there, how could he have made his way into the room without attracting their attention? There was no solving the problem.

"We won't look any more," said Perenna; "it's no use. In matters of this sort, some day or other the light enters by an unseen cranny and everything gradually becomes clear. Take the letter to the Prefect of Police, tell him how we spent the night and ask his permission for both of us to come back on the night of the twenty-fifth of April. There's to be another surprise that night; and I'm dying to know if we shall receive a second letter through the agency of some Mahatma."

They closed the doors and left the house.

While they were walking to the right, toward La Muette, in order to take a taxi, Don Luis chanced to turn his head to the road as they reached the end of the Boulevard Suchet. A man rode past them on a bicycle. Don Luis just had time to see his clean-shaven face and his glittering eyes, fixed upon himself.

"Look out!" he shouted, pushing Mazeroux so suddenly that the sergeant lost his balance.

The man had stretched out his hand, armed with a revolver. A shot rang out. The bullet whistled past the ears of Don Luis, who had bobbed his head.

"After him!" he roared. "You're not hurt, Mazeroux?"

"No, chief."

They both rushed in pursuit, shouting for assistance. But at that early hour there are never many people in the wide avenues of this part of the town. The man, who was making off swiftly, increased his distance, turned down the Rue Octave-Feuillet and disappeared.

"All right, you scoundrel, I'll catch you yet!" snarled Don Luis, abandoning a vain pursuit.

"But you don't even know who he is, chief."

"Yes, I do; it's he!"

"Who?"

"The man with the ebony stick. He's cut off his beard and shaved his face, but I knew him for all that. It was the man who was taking pot-shots at us yesterday morning from the top of his stairs on the Boulevard Richard-Wallace, the one who killed Inspector Ancenis. The blackguard! How did he know that I had spent the night at Fauville's? Have I been followed then and spied on? But by whom? And why? And how?"

Mazeroux reflected and said:

"Remember, chief, you telephoned to me in the afternoon to give me an appointment. For all you know, in spite of lowering your voice, you may have been heard by somebody at your place."

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Don Luis did not answer. He thought of Florence.

THAT morning Don Luis' letters were not brought to him by Mlle. Levasseur, nor did he send for her. He caught sight of her several times, giving orders to the new servants. She must afterward have gone back to her room, for he did not see her again.

In the afternoon he rang for his car and drove to the house on the Boulevard Suchet, to pursue with Mazeroux, by the Prefect's instructions, a search that led to no result whatever.

It was ten o'clock when he came in. The detective sergeant and he had some dinner together. Afterward, wishing also to examine the home of the man with the ebony stick, he got into his car again, still accompanied by Mazeroux, and told the man to drive to the Boulevard Richard-Wallace.

The car crossed the Seine and followed the right bank.

"Faster," he said to his new chauffeur through the speaking-tube. "I'm accustomed to go at a good pace."

"You'll have an upset one fine day, chief," said Mazeroux.

"No fear," replied Don Luis. "Motor accidents are reserved for fools."

They reached the Place de l'Alma. The car turned to the left.

"Straight ahead!" cried Don Luis. "Go up by the Trocadéro."

The car veered back again. But suddenly it gave three or four lurches in the road, took the pavement, ran into a tree and fell over on its side.

In a few seconds a dozen people were standing around. They broke one of the windows and opened the door. Don Luis was the first.

"It's nothing," he said. "I'm all right. And you, Alexandre?"

They helped out the sergeant. He had a few bruises and a little pain, but no serious injury.

The chauffeur had been thrown from his seat and lay motionless on the pavement, bleeding from the head. He was carried into a drug-store, where he died in ten minutes.

Mazeroux had gone in with the poor victim and, feeling pretty well stunned, had himself been given a pick-me-up. When he went back to the motor-car he found two policemen entering particulars of the accident in their notebooks and taking evidence from the bystanders; but the chief was not there.

Perenna in fact had jumped into a taxi-cab and driven home as fast as he could. He got out in the square, ran through the gateway, crossed the courtyard and went down the passage that led to Mlle. Levasseur's quarters. He leaped up the steps, knocked and entered without waiting for an answer.

The door of the room that served as a sitting-room was opened and Florence appeared. He pushed her back into the room and said in a tone furious with indignation:

"It's done. The accident has occurred. And yet none of the old servants can have prepared it, because they were not there and because I was out with the car this afternoon. Therefore it must have been late in the day, between six and nine o'clock, that somebody went to the garage and filed the steering-rod three quarters through."

"I don't understand. . . . I don't understand," she said with a scared look.

"You understand perfectly well that the accomplice of the ruffians can not be one of the new servants and you understand perfectly well that the job was bound to succeed and that it did succeed, beyond their hopes. There is a victim who suffers instead of myself."

"But tell me what has happened, monsieur! You frighten me! What accident? What was it?"

"The motor-car was overturned. The chauffeur is dead."

"Oh," she said, "how horrible! And you think that I can have——Oh, dead! How horrible! Poor man!"

Her voice grew fainter. She was standing opposite to Perenna, close up against him. Pale and swooning, she closed her eyes—staggered.

He caught her in his arms as she fell. She tried to release herself, but had not the strength; and he laid her in a chair, while she moaned repeatedly:

"Poor man! . . . Poor man!"

Keeping one of his arms under the girl's head, he took a handkerchief in the other hand and wiped her forehead, which was wet with perspiration, and her pallid cheeks, down which the tears streamed.

She must have lost consciousness entirely, for she surrendered herself to Perenna's

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cares without the least resistance. And he, making no further movement, began anxiously to examine the mouth before his eyes —the mouth, with the lips, usually so red, now bloodless and discolored.

Gently, passing one of his fingers over each of them with a continuous pressure, he separated them, as one separates the petals of a flower; and the two rows of teeth appeared.

They were charming, beautifully shaped and beautifully white; a little smaller perhaps than Mme. Fauville's, perhaps also arranged in a wider curve. But what did he know? Who could say that their bite would not leave the same imprint? It was an improbable supposition, an impossible miracle, he knew. And yet the circumstances were all against the girl and pointed to her as the most daring, cruel, implacable and terrible of criminals.

Her breathing became regular. He perceived the cool fragrance of her mouth, intoxicating as the scent of a rose. In spite of himself he bent down, came so close, so close that he was seized with giddiness and had to make a great effort to lay the girl's head on the back of the chair and to take his eyes from the fair face with the half-parted lips.

He arose to his feet and went.

CHAPTER IX

THE DEVIL'S POST-OFFICE

OF ALL these events, the public knew only of the attempted suicide of Mme. Fauville, the capture and escape of Gaston Sauverand, the murder of Chief Inspector Ancenis, and the discovery of a letter written by Hippolyte Fauville. This was enough, however, to reawaken their curiosity, as they were already singularly puzzled by the Mornington case and took the greatest interest in all the movements, however slight, of the mysterious Don Luis Perenna, whom they insisted on confusing with Arsène Lupin.

He was, of course, credited with the brief capture of the man with the ebony walking-stick. It was also known that he had saved the life of the Prefect of Police and that, finally, having at his own request spent the night in the house on the Boulevard Suchet, he had become the recipient of Hippolyte Fauville's famous letter. And all this added immensely to the excitement of the aforesaid public.

But how much more complicated and disconcerting were the problems set to Don Luis Perenna himself! Not to mention the denunciation in the anonymous article, there had been, in the short space of forty-eight hours, no fewer than four separate attempts to kill him: by the iron curtain, by poison, by the shooting on the Boulevard Suchet and by the deliberately prepared motor-accident.

Florence's share in this series of attempts was not to be denied. And now, behold her relations with the Fauvilles' murderers duly established by the little note found in the eighth volume of Shakespeare's plays, while two more deaths were added to the melancholy list—the deaths of Chief Inspector Ancenis and of the chauffeur. How to describe and how to explain the part played, in the midst of all these catastrophes, by that enigmatical girl?

Strangely enough, life went on as usual at the house in the Place du Palais-Bourbon, as if nothing out of the way had happened there. Every morning Florence Levasseur sorted Don Luis' mail in his presence and read out the newspaper articles referring to himself or bearing upon the Mornington case.

Not a single allusion was made to the fierce fight that had been waged against him for two days. It was as if a truce had been proclaimed between them; and the enemy appeared to have ceased his attacks for the moment. Don Luis felt easy, out of the reach of danger; and he talked to the girl with an indifferent air, as he might have talked to anybody.

But with what a feverish interest he studied her unobserved! He watched the expression of her face, at once calm and eager, and a painful sensitiveness which showed under the placid mask and which, difficult to control, revealed itself in the frequent quivering of the lips and nostrils.

"Who are you? Who are you?" he felt inclined to exclaim. "Will nothing content you, you she-devil, but to deal out murder all 'round? And do you want my death also, in order to attain your object? Where do you come from and where are you making for?"

On reflection, he was convinced of a certainty that solved a problem which had preoccupied him for a long time; namely, the

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mysterious connection between his own presence in the mansion in the Place du Palais-Bourbon and the presence of a woman who was manifestly wreaking her hatred on him.

He now understood that he had not bought the house by accident. In making the purchase, he had been persuaded by an anonymous offer that reached him in the form of a typewritten prospectus. Whence did this offer come, if not from Florence, who wished to have him near her in order to spy upon him and wage war upon him?

"Yes," he thought, "that is where the truth lies. As the possible heir of Cosmo Mornington and a prominent figure in the case, I am the enemy and they are trying to do away with me as they did with the others. And it is Florence who is acting against me. And it is she who has committed murder.

"Everything tells against her; nothing speaks in her defense. Her innocent eyes? The accent of sincerity in her voice? Her serene dignity? . . . And then? Yes, what then? Have I never seen women with that frank look, who have committed murder for no reason, almost for pleasure's sake?"

He started with terror at the memory of Dolores Kesselbach. What was it that made him connect these two women at every moment in his mind? He had loved one of them—that monster Dolores—and had strangled her with his own hands. Was fate now leading him toward a like love and a similar murder?

When Florence left him he would experience a sense of satisfaction and breathe more easily, as if released from an oppressive weight, but he would run to the window and see her crossing the courtyard and be still waiting when the girl whose scented breath he had felt upon his face passed to and fro.

One morning she said to him—

"The papers say that it will be tonight."

"Tonight?"

"Yes," she said, showing him an article in one of the newspapers. "This is the twenty-fifth; and, according to the information of the police, supplied, they say, by you, there should be a letter delivered in the house on the Boulevard Suchet every tenth day and the house is to be destroyed by an explosion on the day when the fifth and last letter appears."

Was she defying him? Did she wish to make him understand that, whatever happened, whatever the obstacles, the letters would appear—those mysterious letters prophesied on the list which he had found in the eighth volume of Shakespeare's plays?

He looked at her steadily. She did not flinch. He answered:

"Yes, this is the night. I shall be there. Nothing in the world will prevent me."

She was on the point of replying, but once more controlled her feelings.

That day Don Luis was on his guard. He lunched and dined out and arranged with Mazeroux to have the Place du Palais-Bourbon watched.

Mlle. Levasseur did not leave the house during the afternoon. In the evening, Don Luis ordered Mazeroux's men to follow any one who might go out then.

AT TEN o'clock the sergeant joined Don Luis in Hippolyte Fauville's workroom. Deputy Chief Detective Weber and two plain-clothes men were with him.

Don Luis took Mazeroux aside.

"They distrust me. Own up to it."

"No. As long as M. Desmalions is there, they can do nothing against you. Only, M. Weber maintains—and he is not the only one—that you fake up all these occurrences yourself."

"With what object?"

"With the object of furnishing proof against Marie Fauville and getting her condemned. So I asked for the attendance of the deputy chief and two men. There will be four of us to bear witness to your honesty."

They all took up their posts. Two detectives were to sit up in turns.

This time, after making a minute search of the little room in which Fauville's son used to sleep, they locked and bolted the doors and shutters. At eleven o'clock they switched off the electric chandelier.

Don Luis and Weber slept hardly at all.

The night passed without incident of any kind.

But at seven o'clock, when the shutters were opened, they saw that there was a letter on the table. Just as on the last occasion, there was a letter on the table!

When the first moment of stupefaction was over, the deputy chief took the letter.

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His orders were not to read it and not to let any one else read it.

Here is the letter, published by the newspapers, which also published the declarations of the experts certifying that the handwriting was Hippolyte Fauville's:

I have seen him! You understand, don't you, my dear friend? I have seen him! He was walking along a path in the Bois, with his coat-collar turned up and his hat pulled over his ears. I don't think that he saw me. It was almost dark. But I knew him at once. I knew the silver handle of his ebony stick. It was he beyond a doubt, the scoundrel!

So he is in Paris, in spite of his promise! Gaston Sauverand is in Paris! Do you understand the terrible significance of that fact? If he is in Paris, it means that he intends to act. If he is in Paris, it means certain death to me. Oh, the harm which I shall have suffered at that man's hands! He has already robbed me of my happiness; and now he wants my life. I am terrified.

So Fauville knew that the man with the ebony walking-stick, that Gaston Sauverand, was designing to kill him. Fauville declared it most positively, by evidence written in his own hand; and the letter, moreover, corroborating the words that had escaped Gaston Sauverand at his arrest, showed that the two men had at one time had dealings with each other, that they were no longer friends and that Gaston Sauverand had promised never to come to Paris.

A little light was therefore being shed on the darkness of the Mornington case. But, on the other hand, how inconceivable was the mystery of that letter found on the table in the workroom!

Five men had kept watch, five of the smartest men obtainable; and yet, on that night, as on the night of the fifteenth of April, an unknown hand had delivered the letter in a room with barricaded doors and windows, without their hearing a sound or discovering any signs that the fastenings of the doors or windows had been tampered with.

The theory of a secret outlet was at once raised, but had to be abandoned after a careful examination of the walls and after an interview with the contractor who had built the house, from Fauville's own plans, some years before.

It is unnecessary once more to recall what I may describe as the flurry of the public. The deed, in the circumstances, assumed the appearance of a sleight-of-hand trick. People felt tempted to look upon it as the recreation of some wonderfully skilful conjurer rather than as the act of a person employing unknown methods.

Nevertheless, Don Luis Perenna's intelligence was justified at all points, for the expected incident had taken place on the twenty-fifth of April, as on the fifteenth. Would the series be continued on the fifth of May? No one doubted it, because Don Luis had said so and because everybody felt that Don Luis could not be mistaken. All through the night of the fifth of May there was a crowd on the Boulevard Suchet; and busybodies and night-birds of every kind came trooping up to hear the latest news.

The Prefect of Police, greatly impressed by the first two miracles, had determined to see the next one for himself and was present in person on the third night.

He came accompanied by several inspectors, whom he left in the garden, in the passage and in the attic on the upper story. He himself took up his post on the ground floor with Weber, Mazeroux and Don Luis Perenna.

Their expectations were disappointed; and this was M. Desmalions' fault. In spite of the express opinion of Don Luis, who deprecated the experiment as useless, the Prefect had decided not to turn off the electric light, so that he might see if the light would prevent the miracle. Under these conditions no letter could appear and no letter did appear. The miracle, whether a conjuring trick or a criminal's device, needed the kindly aid of the darkness.

There were therefore ten days lost, always presuming that the diabolical postman would dare to repeat his attempt and produce the third mysterious letter.

ON THE fifteenth of May the wait was renewed, while the same crowd gathered outside—an anxious, breathless crowd, stirred by the least sound and keeping an impressive silence, with eyes gazing upon the Fauvilles' house.

This time the light was put out, but the Prefect of Police kept his hand on the electric switch. Ten times, twenty times, he unexpectedly turned on the light. There was nothing on the table. What had aroused his attention was the creaking of a piece of furniture or a movement made by one of the men with him.

Suddenly they all uttered an exclamation. Something unusual, a rustling noise, had interrupted the silence.

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M. Desmalions at once switched on the light. He gave a cry. A letter lay, not on the table, but beside it, on the floor, on the carpet!

Mazeroux made the sign of the cross. The inspectors were as pale as death.

M. Desmalions looked at Don Luis, who nodded his head without a word.

They inspected the condition of the locks and bolts. Nothing had moved.

That day again, the contents of the letter made some amends for the really extraordinary manner of its delivery. It completely dispelled all the doubts that still enshrouded the double murder on the Boulevard Suchet.

Again signed by the engineer, written throughout by himself, on the eighth of February, with no visible address, it said:

No, my dear friend, I will not allow myself to be killed like a sheep led to the slaughter. I shall defend myself, I shall fight to the last moment. Things have changed lately. I have proofs now, undeniable proofs. I possess letters that have passed between them. And I know that they still love each other as they did at the start, that they want to marry and that they will let nothing stand in their way. It is written—understand what I say—it is written in Marie's own hand: "Have patience, my own Gaston. My courage increases day by day. So much the worse for him who stands between us. He shall disappear."

My dear friend, if I succumb in the struggle, you will find those letters (and all the evidence which I have collected against the wretched creature) in the safe hidden behind the small glass case. Then revenge me. *Au revoir.* Perhaps good-by.

Thus ran the third missive. Hippolyte Fauville from his grave named and accused his guilty wife. From his grave he supplied the solution to the riddle and explained the reason why the crimes had been committed: Marie Fauville and Gaston Sauverand were lovers.

Certainly, they knew of the existence of Cosmo Mornington's will, for they had begun by doing away with Cosmo Mornington; and their eagerness to come into the enormous fortune had hastened the catastrophe. But the first idea of the murder arose from an older and deep-rooted passion: Marie Fauville and Gaston Sauverand were lovers.

One problem remained to be solved: who was the unknown correspondent to whom Hippolyte Fauville had bequeathed the task of avenging his murder and who, instead of simply handing over the letters to the police, was exercising his ingenuity to deliver them by means of the most Machiavellian contrivances? Was it to his interest also to remain in the background?

To all these questions Marie Fauville replied in the most unexpected manner, though it was one that fully accorded with her threats. A week later, after a long cross-examination at which she was pressed for the name of her husband's old friend and at which she maintained the most stubborn silence, together with a sort of stupid inertia, she returned to her cell in the evening and opened the veins of her wrist with a piece of glass which she had managed to hide.

Don Luis heard the news from Mazeroux, who came to tell him of it before eight o'clock the next morning, just as he was getting out of bed. The sergeant had a traveling-bag in his hand and was on his way to catch a train.

Don Luis was greatly upset.

"Is she dead?" he exclaimed.

"No. It seems that she has had one more let-off. But what's the good?"

"How do you mean, what's the good?"

"She'll do it again, of course. She's set her mind upon it. And, one day or another——"

"Did she volunteer no confession this time either, before making the attempt on her life?"

"No. She wrote a few words on a scrap of paper, saying that, on thinking it over, she advised us to ask a certain M. Langernault about the mysterious letters. He was the only friend that she had known her husband to possess, or at any rate the only one whom he would have called, 'My dear fellow,' or, 'My dear friend.' This M. Langernault could do no more than prove her innocence and explain the terrible misunderstanding of which she was the victim."

"But," said Don Luis, "if there is any one to prove her innocence, why does she begin by opening her veins?"

"She doesn't care, she says. Her life is done for; and what she wants is rest and death."

"Rest? Rest? There are other ways in which she can find it besides in death. If the discovery of the truth is to spell her safety, perhaps the truth is not impossible to discover."

"What are you saying, chief? Have you guessed anything? Are you beginning to understand?"

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"Yes, very vaguely, but, all the same, the really unnatural accuracy of those letters just seems to me a sign——"

He reflected for a moment and continued—

"Have they reëxamined the erased addresses of the three letters?"

"Yes; and they managed to make out the name of Langernault."

"Where does this Langernault live?"

"According to Mme. Fauville, at the village of Damigni, in the Orme."

"Have they deciphered the word Damigni on one of the letters?"

"No, but they have the name of the nearest town."

"What town is that?"

"Alençon."

"And is that where you're going?"

"Yes; the Prefect of Police told me to go straight away. I shall take the train at the Invalides."

"You mean you will come with me in my motor."

"Eh?"

"We will both of us go, my boy. I want to be doing something; the atmosphere of this house is deadly for me."

"What are you talking about, chief?"

"Nothing. I know."

HALF an hour later, they were flying along the Versailles Road. Perenna himself was driving his open car and driving it in such a way that Mazeroux, almost stifling, kept blurting out, at intervals:

"Lord, what a pace! . . . Hang it all, how you're letting her go, chief! . . . Aren't you afraid of a smash? Remember the other day——"

They reached Alençon in time for lunch. When they had done, they went to the post-office. Nobody knew the name of Langernault there. Besides, Damigni had its own post-office, though the presumption was that M. Langernault had his letters addressed to the Alençon post-office.

Don Luis and Mazeroux went on to the village of Damigni. Here again the postmaster knew no one of the name of Langernault; and this in spite of the fact that Damigni contained only about a thousand inhabitants.

"Let's go and call on the Mayor," said Perenna.

At the Mayor's, Mazeroux stated who he was and mentioned the object of his visit. The Mayor nodded his head.

"Old Langernault? I should think so. A decent fellow; used to run a business in the town."

"And accustomed, I suppose, to fetch his letters from the Alençon post-office?"

"That's it; every day, for the sake of the walk."

"And his house?"

"Is at the end of the village. You passed it as you came along."

"Can we see it?"

"Well, of course . . . only——"

"Perhaps he's not at home?"

"Certainly not! The poor, dear man hasn't even set foot in the house since he left it the last time, four years ago!"

"How is that?"

"Why, he's been dead these four years!"

Don Luis and Mazeroux exchanged a glance of amazement.

"So he's dead?" said Don Luis.

"Yes—a gun-shot."

"What's that?" cried Perenna. "Was he murdered?"

"No, no. They thought so at first, when they picked him up on the floor of his room; but the inquest proved that it was an accident. He was cleaning his gun; and it went off and sent a load of shot into his stomach. All the same, we thought it very queer in the village. Daddy Langernault, an old hunter before the Lord, was not the man to commit an act of carelessness."

"Had he money?"

"Yes; and that's just what clinched the matter: they couldn't find a penny of it."

Don Luis remained thinking for some time and then asked—

"Did he leave any children, any relations of the same name?"

"Nobody, not even a cousin. The proof is that his property—it's called the Old Castle, because of the ruins on it—has reverted to the State. The authorities have had the doors of the house sealed up and locked the gate of the park. They are waiting for the legal period to expire in order to take possession."

"And don't sightseers go walking in the park, in spite of the walls?"

"Not they. In the first place, the walls are very high. And then . . . and then the Old Castle has had a bad reputation in the neighborhood ever since I can remember. There has always been a talk of

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ghosts—a pack of silly tales. But still——"

Perenna and his companion could not get over their surprise.

"This is a funny affair!" exclaimed Don Luis, when they had left the mayor's. "Here we have Fauville writing his letters to a dead man . . . and to a dead man, by the way, who looks to me very much as if he had been murdered."

"Some one must have intercepted the letters."

"Obviously. But that does not do away with the fact that he wrote them to a dead man and made his confidences to a dead man and told him of his wife's criminal intentions."

Mazeroux was silent. He too seemed greatly perplexed.

They spent part of the afternoon in asking about old Langernault's habits, hoping to receive some useful clue from the people who had known him. But their efforts led to nothing.

At six o'clock, as they were about to start, Don Luis found that the car had run out of gasoline and sent Mazeroux in a trap to the outskirts of Alençon to fetch some. He employed the delay in going to look at the Old Castle outside the village.

He had to follow a hedged road leading to an open space, planted with lime trees, where a massive wooden gate stood in the middle of a wall. The gate was locked. Don Luis walked along the wall, which was, in fact, very high and presented no opening. Nevertheless, he managed to climb over by means of the branches of a tree.

The park consisted of unkept lawns overgrown with large wild flowers, and grass-covered avenues leading on the right to a distant mound thickly dotted with ruins, and, on the left, to a small tumble-down house with ill fitting shutters.

He was turning in this direction, when he was much surprised to perceive fresh footprints on a border which had been soaked with the recent rain. And he could see that these footprints had been made by a woman's boots—a pair of elegant and dainty boots.

"Who the devil comes walking here?" he thought.

He found more footprints a little farther on, on another border which the owner of the boots had crossed, and they led him away from the house, toward a series of clumps of trees where he saw them twice more. Then he lost sight of them for good.

HE WAS standing near a large, half ruined barn, built against a very tall bank. Its worm-eaten doors seemed merely balanced on their hinges. He went up and looked through a crack in the wood. Inside the windowless barn was in semi-darkness, for but little light came through the openings stopped up with straw, especially as the day was beginning to wane. He was able to distinguish a heap of barrels, broken wine-presses, old plows and scrap-iron of all kinds.

"This is certainly not where my fair stroller turned her steps," thought Don Luis. "Let's look somewhere else."

Nevertheless he did not move. He had noticed a noise in the barn.

He listened and heard nothing. But as he wanted to get to the bottom of things he forced out a couple of planks with his shoulder and stepped in.

The breach which he had thus contrived admitted a little light. He could see enough to make his way between two casks, over some broken window-frames, to an empty space on the far side.

His eyes grew accustomed to the darkness as he went on. For all that, he knocked his head against something which he had not perceived—something hanging up above, something rather hard which, when set in motion, swung to and fro with a curious grating sound.

It was too dark to see. Don Luis took an electric lantern from his pocket and pressed the spring.

"——it all!" he swore, falling back aghast.

Above him hung a skeleton!

And the next moment he uttered another oath. A second skeleton hung beside the first!

They were both fastened by stout ropes to rings fixed in the rafters of the barn. Their heads dangled from the slip-knots. The one against which Perenna had struck was still moving slightly and the bones clicked together with a gruesome sound.

He dragged forward a rickety table, propped it up as best he could, and climbed on to it to examine the two skeletons more closely. They were turned toward each other, face to face. The first was considerably bigger than the second. They were obviously the skeletons of a man and a woman. Even when they were not moved by a jolt of any kind, the wind blowing through the

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crevices in the barn set them lightly swinging to and fro, in a sort of very slow, rhythmical dance.

But what perhaps was most impressive in this ghastly spectacle was the fact that each of the skeletons, though deprived of every rag of clothing, still wore a gold ring, too wide now that the flesh had disappeared, but held, as in hooks, by the bent joints of the fingers.

He slipped off the rings with a shiver of disgust, and found that they were wedding rings. Each bore a date inside—the same date, 12 August 1887—and two names: "Alfred; Victorine."

"Husband and wife," he murmured. "Is it a double suicide? Or a murder? But how is it possible that the two skeletons have not yet been discovered? Can one conceive that they have been here since the death of old Langernault, since the Government has taken possession of the estate and made it impossible for anybody to walk in?"

He paused to reflect.

"Anybody? I don't know about that, considering that I saw footprints in the garden and that a woman has been there this very day!"

The thought of the unknown visitor engrossed him once more; and he got down from the table. In spite of the noise which he had heard, it was hardly to be supposed that she had entered the barn. And after a few minutes' search he was about to go out when there came from the left a clash of things falling about and some hoops dropped to the ground not far from where he stood.

They came from above, from a loft likewise crammed with various objects and implements and reached by a ladder. Was he to believe that the visitor, surprised by his arrival, had taken refuge in that hiding-place and made a movement that caused the fall of the hoops?

Don Luis placed his electric lantern on a cask in such a way as to send the light right up to the loft. Seeing nothing suspicious, nothing but an arsenal of old pick-axes, rakes and disused scythes, he attributed what had happened to some animal, to some stray cat; and, to make sure, he walked quickly to the ladder and went up.

Suddenly, at the very moment when he reached the level of the floor, there was a fresh noise, a fresh clatter of things falling. And a form arose from the heap of rubbish, with a terrible gesture.

It was swift as lightning. Don Luis saw the great blade of a scythe cleaving the air at the height of his head. Had he hesitated for a second, for the tenth of a second, the awful weapon would have beheaded him. As it was, he just had time to flatten himself against the ladder. The scythe whistled past him, grazing his jacket. He slid down to the floor below.

But he had seen.

He had seen the dreadful face of Gaston Sauverand and, behind the man of the ebony walking-stick, wan and livid in the rays of the electric light, the distorted features of Florence Levasseur!

CHAPTER X

LUPIN'S ANGER

HE REMAINED for one moment motionless and speechless. Above was a perfect clatter of things being pushed about, as if the besieged were building themselves a barricade. But to the right of the electric rays, diffused daylight entered through an opening that was suddenly exposed; and he saw, in front of this opening, first one form and then another stooping in order to escape over the roofs.

He leveled his revolver and fired, but badly, for he was thinking of Florence and his hand trembled. Three more shots rang out. The bullets rattled against the old scrap-iron in the loft. The fifth shot was followed by a cry of pain. Don Luis once more rushed up the ladder.

Slowly making his way through the tangle of farm implements and over some cases of dried rape-seed forming a regular rampart, he at last, after bruising and barking his shins, succeeded in reaching the opening and was greatly surprised, on passing through it, to find himself on level ground. It was the top of the sloping bank against which the barn stood.

He descended the slope at haphazard, to the left of the barn, and passed in front of the building, but saw nobody. He then went up again on the right; and, although the flat part was very narrow, he searched it carefully—for, in the growing darkness of the twilight, he had every reason to fear renewed attacks from the enemy.

He now became aware of something which he had not perceived before. The bank ran along the top of the wall, which at this spot

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was quite sixteen feet high. Gaston Sauverand and Florence had, beyond a doubt, escaped this way.

Perenna followed the wall, which was fairly wide, till he came to a lower part and here he jumped into a plowed field skirting a little wood toward which the fugitives must have run. He started exploring it but, realizing its denseness, he at once saw that it was waste of time to linger in pursuit.

He therefore returned to the village, while thinking over this, his latest exploit. Once again Florence and her accomplice had tried to get rid of him. Once again Florence figured prominently in this network of criminal plots.

At the moment when chance informed Don Luis that old Langernault had probably died by foul play, at the moment when chance, by leading him to Hanged Man's Barn, as he christened it, brought him into the presence of two skeletons, Florence appeared as a murderous vision, as an evil genius who was seen wherever death had passed with its trail of blood and corpses.

"Oh, the loathsome creature!" he muttered with a shudder. "How can she have so fair a face and eyes of such haunting beauty, so grave, sincere and almost guileless?"

In the church-square, beside the inn, Mazeroux, who had returned, was filling the gasoline-tank of the motor and lighting the lamps. Don Luis saw the Mayor of Damigni crossing the square. He took the official aside.

"By the way, Monsieur le Maire, did you ever hear any talk in the District, perhaps two years ago, of the disappearance of a couple of about fifty years of age? The husband's name was Alfred——"

"And the wife's Victorine, eh?" the Mayor broke in. "I should think so! The affair created some stir. They lived at Alençon on a small private income; they disappeared between one day and the next; and no one has since discovered what became of them, any more than a little hoard, some twenty thousand francs or so, which they had realized the day before by the sale of their house. I remember them well. Dedessuslamare their name was."

"Thank you, Monsieur le Maire," said Perenna, who had learned all that he wanted to know.

The car was ready. A minute after he was rushing toward Alençon with Mazeroux.

"Where are we going, chief?" asked the sergeant.

"To the station. I have every reason to believe, first, that Sauverand was informed this morning—in what way remains to be seen—of the revelations made last night by Mme. Fauville relating to old Langernault; and, secondly, that he has been prowling around and inside old Langernault's property today for reasons that also remain to be seen. And I presume that he came by train and that he will go back by train."

Perenna's supposition was confirmed without delay. He was told at the railway-station that a gentleman and a lady had arrived from Paris at two o'clock, that they had hired a trap at the hotel next door and that, having finished their business, they had gone back a few minutes ago, by the 7:40 express. The description of the lady and gentleman corresponded exactly with that of Florence and Sauverand.

"Off we go!" said Perenna, after consulting the time-table. "We are an hour behind. We may catch up with the scoundrel at Le Mans."

"We'll do that, chief, and we'll collar him, I swear; him and his lady, since there are two of them."

"There are two of them, as you say. Only——"

"Only what?"

Don Luis waited to reply until they were seated and the engine started, when he said, "Only, my boy, you will keep your hands off the lady."

"Why should I?"

"Do you know who she is? Have you a warrant against her?"

"No."

"Then shut up."

"But——"

"One word more, Alexandre, and I'll set you down beside the road. Then you can make as many arrests as you please."

Mazeroux did not breathe another word. For that matter the speed at which they at once began to go hardly left him time to raise a protest. Not a little anxious, he thought only of watching the horizon and keeping a look-out for obstacles.

The trees vanished on either side almost unseen. Their foliage overhead made a rhythmical sound as of moaning waves. Night insects dashed themselves to death against the lamps.

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"We shall get there right enough," Mazeroux ventured to observe. "There's no need to put on the pace."

The speed increased and he said no more.

Villages, plains, hills; and then, suddenly in the midst of the darkness, the lights of a large town—Le Mans.

"Do you know the way to the station, Alexandre?"

"Yes, chief; to the right and then straight on."

Of course they ought to have gone to the left. They wasted seven or eight minutes in wandering through the streets and receiving contradictory instructions. When the motor pulled up at the station, the train was whistling.

Don Luis jumped out, rushed through the waiting-room, found the doors shut, jostled the railway officials who tried to stop him and reached the platform.

A train was about to start on the farther line. The last door was banged to. He ran along the carriages, holding on to the brass rails.

"Your ticket, sir! Where's your ticket?" shouted an angry collector.

Don Luis continued to fly along the footboards, giving a swift glance through the panes, thrusting aside the persons whose presence at the windows prevented him from seeing, prepared at any moment to burst into the compartment containing the two accomplices.

He did not see them in the end carriages. The train started. And suddenly he gave a shout: they were there, the two of them, by themselves! He had seen them! They were there: Florence lying on the seat, with her head on Sauverand's shoulder, and he leaning over her, with his arms around her!

Mad with rage he flung back the bottom latch and seized the handle of the carriage door. At the same moment he lost his balance and was pulled off by the furious ticket-collector and by Mazeroux, who bellowed, "Why, you're mad, chief; you'll kill yourself!"

"Let go, you ass!" roared Don Luis. "It's they! Let me be, can't you!"

The carriages filed past. He tried to jump on to another footboard. But the two men were clinging to him; some railway porters came to their assistance; the station-master ran up. The train moved out of the station.

"Idiots!" he shouted. "Boobies! Pack of asses that you are, couldn't you leave me alone? Oh, I swear to Heaven . . . !"

With a blow of his left fist he knocked the ticket-collector down; with a blow of his right he sent Mazeroux spinning. And, shaking off the porters and the station-master, he rushed along the platform to the luggage-room, where he took flying leaps over several batches of trunks, packing-cases and portmanteau.

"Oh, the perfect fool!" he mumbled, on seeing that Mazeroux had let down the power in the car. "Trust him, if there's any blunder going!"

DON LUIS had driven his car at a fine rate during the day; but that night the pace became dizzy. A very meteor flashed through the suburbs of Le Mans and hurled itself along the high-road. Perenna had but one thought in his head: to reach the next station, which was Chartres, before the two accomplices and to fly at Sauverand's throat. He saw nothing but that—the savage grip of his two hands that would set Florence Levasseur's lover gasping in his agony.

"Her lover! Her lover!" he muttered, gnashing his teeth. "Why, of course, that explains everything! They have combined against their accomplice, Marie Fauville; and it is she alone, poor devil, who will pay for the horrible series of crimes!"

"Is she their accomplice even?" he wondered. "Who knows? Who knows if that pair of demons are not capable, after killing Hippolyte and his son, of having plotted the ruin of Marie Fauville, the last obstacle that stood between them and the Mornington inheritance? Doesn't everything point to that conclusion? Didn't I find the list of dates in a book belonging to Florence? Don't the facts prove that the letters were communicated by Florence? . . .

"Those letters accuse Gaston Sauverand as well. But how does that affect things? He no longer loves Marie, but Florence. And Florence loves him. She is his accomplice, his counselor, the woman who will live by his side and benefit by his fortune. . . . True, she sometimes pretends to be defending Marie Fauville. Play-acting! Or perhaps remorse, fright at the thought of all that she has done against her rival and of the fate that awaits the unhappy woman! . . .

"But she is in love with Sauverand. And she continues to carry on the struggle without

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pity and without respite. And that is why she wanted to kill me, the interloper whose insight she dreaded. . . . And she hates me and loathes me——"

To the hum of the engine and the sighing of the trees, which bent down at their approach, he murmured incoherent words. The recollection of the two lovers clasped in each other's arms made him cry aloud with jealousy. He wanted to be revenged. For the first time in his life the longing, the feverish craving, to kill set his brain boiling.

"Hang it all!" he growled suddenly. "The engine's misfiring! Mazeroux! Mazeroux!"

"What, chief! Did you know that I was here?" exclaimed Mazeroux, emerging from the shadow in which he sat hidden.

"You jackass! Do you think that the first idiot who comes along can hang on to the footboard of my car without my knowing it? You must be feeling comfortable down there!"

"I'm suffering agonies; and I'm shivering with cold."

"That's right; it'll teach you. Tell me, where did you buy your gasoline?"

"At the grocer's."

"At a thief's, you mean. It's muck. The plugs are getting sooted up."

"Are you sure?"

"Can't you hear the misfiring, you fool?"

The motor, indeed, at moments seemed to hesitate. Then everything became normal again. Don Luis forced the pace. Going down hill they appeared to be hurling themselves into space. One of the lamps went out. The other was not so bright as usual. But nothing diminished Don Luis' ardor.

There was more misfiring, fresh hesitations, followed by efforts, as if the engine were pluckily striving to do its duty. And then suddenly came the final failure—a dead stop at the side of the road, a stupid break-down.

"Confound it!" roared Don Luis. "We're stuck! Oh, this is the last straw!"

"Come, chief, we'll put it right. And we'll pick up Sauverand at Paris instead of Chartres, that's all."

"You infernal ass! The repairs will take an hour! And then she'll break down again. It's not gasoline, it's filth they've foisted on you!"

The country stretched around them to endless distances, with no other lights than the stars that riddled the darkness of the sky.

Don Luis was stamping with fury. He would have liked to kick the motor to pieces. He would have liked. . . .

It was Mazeroux who "caught it," in the hapless sergeant's own words. Don Luis took him by the shoulders, shook him, loaded him with insults and abuse and, finally pushing him against the roadside-bank and holding him there, said, in a broken voice of mingled hatred and sorrow:

"It's she—do you hear, Mazeroux?—it's Sauverand's companion who has done everything! I'm telling you now, because I'm afraid of relenting. Yes, I am a weak coward! She has such a grave face, with the eyes of a child. But it's she, Mazeroux! She lives in my house. Remember her name—Florence Levasseur. You'll arrest her, won't you? I might not be able to. My courage fails me when I look at her. The fact is that I have never loved before.

"There have been other women . . . But no, those were fleeting fancies . . . Not even that; I don't even remember the past! Whereas Florence . . . ! You must arrest her, Mazeroux! You must deliver me from her eyes. They burn into me like poison. If you don't deliver me I shall kill her as I killed Dolores . . . or else they will kill me . . . or . . . Oh, I don't know all the ideas that are driving me wild——!"

"You see, there's another man," he explained. . . . "There's Sauverand, whom she loves. . . . Oh, the infamous pair! They have killed Fauville and the boy and old Langernault and those two in the barn and others besides—Cosmo Mornington, Vérot and more still. They are monsters, she most of all . . . And, if you saw her eyes——"

He spoke so low that Mazeroux could hardly hear him. He had let go his hold of Mazeroux and seemed utterly cast down with despair—a surprising symptom in a man of his amazing vigor and authority.

"Come, chief!" said the sergeant, helping him up. "This is all stuff and nonsense. . . . Trouble with women: I've had it like everybody else . . . Mme. Mazeroux—yes, I got married while you were away—Mme. Mazeroux turned out badly herself—gave me the devil of a time, Mme. Mazeroux did. I'll tell you all about it, chief, how Mme. Mazeroux rewarded my kindness."

He led Don Luis gently to the car and settled him on the front seat.

"Take a rest, chief. It's not very cold

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and there are plenty of furs. The first peasant that comes along at daybreak, I'll send him to the next town for what we want . . . and for food, too, for I'm starving. And everything will come right; it always does with women. All you have to do is to kick them out of your life . . . except when they anticipate you and kick themselves out . . . I was going to tell you: Mme. Mazeroux——"

Don Luis was never to learn what had happened with Mme. Mazeroux. The most violent catastrophes had no effect upon the peacefulness of his slumbers. He was asleep almost at once.

IT WAS late in the morning when he woke up. Mazeroux had had to wait till seven o'clock before he could hail a cyclist on his way to Chartres.

They made a start at nine o'clock. Don Luis had recovered all his coolness. He turned to the sergeant.

"I said a lot last night that I did not mean to say. However, I don't regret it. Yes, it is my duty to do everything to save Mme. Fauville and to catch the real culprit. Only the task falls upon myself; and I swear that I sha'n't fail in it. This evening Florence Levasseur shall sleep in the lockup!"

"I'll help you, chief," replied Mazeroux in a queer tone of voice.

"I need nobody's help. If you touch a single hair of her head, I'll fix you. Do you understand?"

"Yes, chief."

"Then hold your tongue."

His anger was slowly returning and expressed itself in an increase of speed, which seemed to Mazeroux a revenge executed upon himself. They raced over the cobblestones of Chartres. Rambouillet, Chevreuse and Versailles received the terrifying vision of a thunderbolt tearing across them from end to end.

Saint-Cloud. The Bois de Boulogne . . . .

On the Place de la Concorde, as the motor was turning toward the Tuileries, Mazeroux objected—

"Aren't you going home, chief?"

"No. There's something more urgent first: we must relieve Marie Fauville of her suicidal obsession by letting her know that we have discovered the criminals."

"And then?"

"Then I want to see the Prefect of Police."

"M. Desmalions is away and won't be back till this afternoon."

"In that case the examining magistrate."

"He doesn't get to the law-courts till twelve; and it's only eleven now."

"We'll see."

Mazeroux was right; there was no one at the law-courts.

Don Luis lunched somewhere close by; and Mazeroux, after calling at the detective office, came to fetch him and took him to the magistrate's corridor. Don Luis' excitement, his extraordinary restlessness, did not fail to strike Mazeroux, who asked—

"Are you still of the same mind, chief?"

"More than ever. I looked through the newspapers at lunch. Marie Fauville, who was sent to the infirmary after her second attempt, has again tried to kill herself by banging her head against the wall of the room. They have put a strait-jacket on her. But she is refusing all food. It is my duty to save her."

"How?"

"By handing over the real criminal. I shall inform the magistrate in charge of the case; and this evening I shall bring you Florence Levasseur dead or alive."

"And Sauverand?"

"Sauverand? That won't take long. Unless——"

"Unless what?"

"Unless I settle his business myself, the miscreant!"

"Chief!"

"Oh, dry up!"

There were some reporters near them waiting for particulars. He recognized them and went up to them.

"You can say, gentlemen, that from today I am taking up the defense of Marie Fauville and devoting myself entirely to her cause."

They all protested. Was it not he who had had Mme. Fauville arrested? Was it not he who had collected a heap of convicting proofs against her?

"I shall demolish those proofs one by one," he said. "Marie Fauville is the victim of wretches who have hatched the most diabolical plot against her, and whom I am about to deliver up to justice."

"But the teeth? The marks of the teeth!"

"A coincidence! An unparalleled coincidence, but one which now strikes me as a most powerful proof of innocence. I tell you that, if Marie Fauville had been clever

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enough to commit all those murders, she would also have been clever enough not to leave behind her a fruit bearing the marks of her two rows of teeth."

"But still——"

"She is innocent! And that is what I am going to tell the examining magistrate. She must be informed of the efforts that are being made in her favor. She must be given hope at once. If not, the poor thing will kill herself and her death will be on the conscience of all who accused an innocent woman. She must——"

At that moment he interrupted himself. His eyes were fixed on a journalist who was standing a little way off, listening to him and taking notes.

He whispered to Mazeroux:

"Could you manage to find out that fellow's name? I can't remember where on earth I've seen him before."

But an usher now opened the door of the examining magistrate, who on receiving Don Perenna's card had asked to see him at once. He stepped forward and was about to enter the room with Mazeroux, when he suddenly turned to his companion with a cry of rage:

"It's he! It was Sauverand in disguise! Stop him! He's made off! Run, can't you?"

He himself darted away, followed by Mazeroux and a number of warders and journalists. He soon outdistanced them, so that, three minutes later, he heard no one more behind him. He had rushed down the staircase of the "Mousetrap" and through the subway leading from one courtyard to the other. Here two people told him that they had met a man walking at a smart pace.

The track was a false one. He became aware of this, hunted about, lost a good deal of time and managed to discover that Sauverand had left by the Boulevard du Palais and joined a very pretty, fair-haired woman—Florence Levasseur, obviously—on the Quai de l'Horloge. They had both got into the motor-'bus that runs from the Place Saint-Michel to the Gare Saint-Lazare.

Don Luis went back to a lonely little street where he had left his car in the charge of a boy. He set the engine going and drove at full speed to the Gare Saint-Lazare. From the omnibus-shelter he went off on a fresh track which also proved to be wrong, lost quite another hour, returned to the terminus and ended by learning for certain that Florence had stepped by herself into a motor-'bus which would take her toward the Place du Palais-Bourbon. Contrary to all his expectations therefore, the girl must have gone home.

The thought of seeing her again aroused his anger to its highest pitch. All the way down the Rue Royale and across the Place de la Concorde he kept blurting out words of revenge and threats which he was itching to carry out. He would abuse Florence. He would sting her with his insults. He felt a bitter and painful need to hurt the odious creature.

But on reaching the Place du Palais-Bourbon he pulled up short. His practised eye had counted at a glance, on the right and left, a half dozen men whose professional look there was no mistaking. And Mazeroux, who had caught sight of him, had spun around on his heel and was hiding under a gateway.

He called him—

"Mazeroux!"

The sergeant appeared greatly surprised to hear his name and came up to the car.

"Hullo! The chief!"

His face expressed such embarrassment that Don Luis felt his fears taking definite shape.

"Look here, is it for me that you and your men are hanging about outside my house?"

"There's a notion, chief!" replied Mazeroux, looking very uncomfortable. "You know that you're in favor all right!"

Don Luis gave a start. He understood. Mazeroux had betrayed his confidence. To obey his scruples of conscience as well as to rescue the chief from the dangers of a fatal passion, Mazeroux had denounced Florence Levasseur.

Perenna clenched his fists in an effort of his whole being to stifle his boiling rage. It was a terrible blow. He received a sudden intuition of all the blunders which his mad jealousy had made him commit since the day before, and a presentiment of the irreparable disasters that might result from them. The conduct of events was slipping from him.

"Have you the warrant?" he asked.

Mazeroux spluttered:

"It was quite by accident. I met the Prefect, who was back. We spoke of the

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young lady's business. And, as it happened, they had discovered that the photograph—you know, the photograph of Florence Levasseur which the Prefect lent you—well, they have discovered that you faked it. And then, when I mentioned the name of Florence, the Prefect remembered that that was the name."

"Have you the warrant?" Don Luis repeated in a harsher tone.

"Well, you see, I couldn't help it. . . . M. Desmalions, the magistrate——"

If the Place du Palais Bourbon had been deserted at that moment, Don Luis would certainly have relieved himself by a swinging blow administered to Mazeroux's chin according to the most scientific rules of the noble art.

And Mazeroux foresaw this contingency, for he prudently kept as far away as possible and, to appease the chief's anger, intoned a whole litany of excuses:

"It was for your good, chief. . . . I had to do it. . . . Only think! You yourself told me: 'Rid me of the creature!' said you. 'I'm too weak. You'll arrest her, won't you? Her eyes burn into me . . . like poison!' Well, chief, could I help it? No, I couldn't, could I? . . . Especially as the deputy chief . . . "

"Ah! So Weber knows?"

"Why, yes! The Prefect is a little suspicious of you since he understood about the faking of the portrait. So M. Weber is coming back in an hour, perhaps, with reënforcements . . . Well, as I was saying, the deputy chief had learned that the woman who used to go to Gaston Sauverand's at Neuilly—you know, the house on the Boulevard Richard-Wallace—was fair and very good-looking and that her name was Florence. She even used to stay the night sometimes."

"You lie! You lie!" hissed Perenna.

All his spite was reviving. He had been pursuing Florence, with intentions which it would have been difficult for him to put into words. And now suddenly he again wanted to destroy her; and this time consciously. In reality he no longer knew what he was doing. He was acting at haphazard, tossed about in turns by the most diverse passions, a prey to that inordinate love which impels us as readily to kill the object of our affections as to die in an attempt to save her.

A newsboy passed with a special edition of the *Paris Midi*, showing in great block letters:

SENSATIONAL DECLARATION BY DON LUIS PERENNA

MME. FAUVILLE IS INNOCENT

ARREST OF THE TWO CRIMINALS IMMINENT

"Yes, yes," he said aloud. "The drama is drawing to an end. Florence is about to pay her debt to society. So much the worse for her!"

He started his car again and drove through the gate. In the courtyard he said to his chauffeur, who came up:

"Turn her around and don't put her up. I may be starting again at any moment."

He sprang out and asked the butler—

"Is Mlle. Levasseur in?"

"Yes, sir; she's in her room."

"She was away yesterday, wasn't she?"

"Yes, sir; she received a telegram asking her to go to the country to see a relation who was ill. She came back last night."

"I want to speak to her. Send her to me. At once."

"In the study, sir?"

"No; upstairs, in the boudoir next to my bedroom."

This was a small room on the second floor which had once been a lady's boudoir; and he preferred it to his study since the attempt at murder of which he had been the object. He was quieter up there, farther away; and he kept his important papers there. He always carried the key with him—a special key with three grooves to it and an inner spring.

MAZEROUX had followed him into the courtyard and was keeping close behind him, apparently unobserved by Perenna. Now, however, Don Luis, took the sergeant by the arm and led him to the front steps.

"All is going well. I was afraid that Florence, suspecting something, might not have come back. But she probably doesn't know that I saw her yesterday. She can't escape us now."

They went across the hall and up the stairs to the first floor. Mazeroux rubbed his hands.

"So you've come to your senses, chief?"

"At any rate I've made up my mind. I

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will not—do you hear?—I will not have Mme. Fauville kill herself; and, as there is no other way of preventing that catastrophe, I shall sacrifice Florence."

"Without regret?"

"Without remorse."

"Then you forgive me?"

"I thank you."

And he struck the sergeant a powerful blow under the chin. Mazeroux fell without a moan, in a dead faint, on the steps of the second flight.

Halfway up the stairs was a dark recess that served as a lumber-room where the servants kept their pails and brooms and the soiled household linen. Don Luis carried Mazeroux to it; and, seating him comfortably on the floor, with his back to a housemaid's box, Don Luis stuffed a handkerchief into the policeman's mouth, gagged him with a towel, and bound his wrists and ankles with two table-cloths. The other ends of these Don Luis fastened to a couple of strong nails.

As Mazeroux was slowly coming to himself, Don Luis said:

"I think you have all you want. Table-cloths . . . napkins . . . something in your mouth in case you're hungry. Eat at your ease. And then take a little nap and you'll wake up as fresh as a daisy."

He locked Mazeroux in, and glanced at his watch.

"I have an hour before me. Good!"

At that moment his intention was to insult Florence, to throw up all her scandalous crimes in her face, and in this way to force a written and signed confession from her. Afterward, when Marie Fauville's safety was insured, he would see. Perhaps he would put Florence in his motor and carry her off to some refuge from which, with the girl for a hostage, he would be able to influence the police. Perhaps . . . But he did not seek to anticipate events. What he wanted was an immediate, violent explanation.

He ran up to his bedroom on the second floor and dipped his face into cold water. Never had he experienced such a stimulation of his whole being, such an unbridling of his blind instincts.

"It's she!" he spluttered. "I hear her! She is at the bottom of the stairs. At last! Oh the joy of having her in front of me! Face to face! She and I alone!"

He returned to the landing outside the boudoir. He took the key from his pocket. The door opened.

He uttered a great shout—Gaston Sauverand was there! In that locked room Gaston Sauverand was waiting for him, standing with folded arms!

CHAPTER XI

"LET US TALK"

GASTON SAUVERAND! Instinctively Don Luis took a step back, drew his revolver and aimed it at the criminal.

"Hands up!" he commanded. "Hands up or I fire!"

Sauverand did not appear to be put out. He nodded toward two revolvers which he had laid on a table beyond his reach and said:

"There are my arms. I have come here not to fight, but to talk."

"How did you get in?" roared Don Luis, exasperated by this display of calmness. "A false key, I suppose? But how did you get hold of the key? How did you manage it?"

The other did not reply. Don Luis stamped his foot:

"Speak, will you? Speak! If not——"

But Florence ran into the room. She passed by him without his trying to stop her, flung herself upon Gaston Sauverand and, taking no need of Perenna's presence, said:

"Why did you come? You promised me that you wouldn't. You swore it to me. Go!"

Sauverand released himself and forced her into a chair.

"Let me be, Florence. I promised only so as to reassure you. Let me be."

"No, I will not!" exclaimed the girl eagerly. "It's madness. I won't have you say a single word. Oh, please, please stop!"

He bent over her and smoothed her forehead, separating her mass of golden hair.

"Let me do things my own way, Florence," he said softly.

She was silent, as if disarmed by the gentleness of his voice; and he whispered more words which Don Luis could not hear and which seemed to convince her.

Perenna had not moved. He stood opposite them with his arm outstretched and his finger on the trigger, aiming at the enemy. When Sauverand addressed Florence by her

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Christian name he started from head to foot and his finger trembled. What miracle kept him from shooting? By what supreme effort of will did he stifle the jealous hatred that burned him like fire? And here was Sauverand daring to stroke Florence's hair!

He lowered his arm. He would kill them later, do with them what he pleased, since they were in his power and since nothing henceforth could snatch them from his vengeance.

He took Sauverand's two revolvers and laid them in a drawer. Then he went back to the door, intending to lock it. But, hearing a sound on the first-floor landing, he leaned over the balusters. The butler was coming upstairs with a tray in his hand.

"What is it now?"

"An urgent letter, sir, for Sergeant Mazeroux."

"Sergeant Mazeroux is with me. Give me the letter and don't let me be disturbed again."

He tore open the envelope. The letter, hurriedly written in pencil and signed by one of the inspectors on duty outside the house, contained these words:

Look out, sergeant. Gaston Sauverand is in the house. Two persons living opposite say that the girl who is known hereabouts as the lady housekeeper came in at half past one, before we took up our posts. She was next seen at the window of her lodge.

A few moments after, a small, low door, used for the cellars and situated under the lodge, was opened, evidently by her. Almost at the same time a man entered the square, came along the wall and slipped in through the cellar-door. According to the description it was Gaston Sauverand. So look out, sergeant. At the least alarm, at the first signal from you, we shall come in.

Don Luis reflected. He now understood how the scoundrel had access to the house and how, hidden in the safest of retreats, he was able to escape every attempt to find him. He was living under the roof of the very man who had declared himself to be Sauverand's most formidable adversary.

"Come, come!" he said to himself. "The fellow's score is settled . . . and so is his young lady's. They can choose between the bullets in my revolver and the handcuffs of the police."

He had ceased to think of his motor standing ready below. He no longer dreamed of flight with Florence. If he did not kill the two of them, the law would lay its hand upon them—the hand that does not let go. And perhaps it was better so—better that society itself should punish the two criminals whom he was about to hand over to it.

He shut the door, pushed the bolt, faced his two prisoners again and, taking a chair, said to Sauverand—

"Let us talk."

Owing to the narrow dimensions of the room, they were all so close together that Don Luis felt as if he were almost touching the man whom he loathed from the very bottom of his heart. Their two chairs were hardly a yard asunder. A long table, covered with books, stood between them and the windows which, hollowed out of the very thick wall, formed a recess, as is usual in old houses.

Florence had turned her chair away from the light, and Don Luis could not see her face clearly. But he looked straight into Gaston Sauverand's face and watched it with eager curiosity; and his anger was heightened by the sight of the still youthful features, the expressive mouth and the intelligent eyes, which were fine in spite of their hardness.

"Well! Speak!" said Don Luis in a commanding tone. "I have agreed to a truce, but a momentary truce, just long enough to say what is necessary. Are you afraid, now that the time has arrived? Do you regret the step which you have taken?"

The man smiled calmly and said—

"I am afraid of nothing and I do not regret coming, for I have a very strong intuition that we can, that we are bound to, come to an understanding."

"An understanding!" protested Don Luis with a start.

"Why not?"

"A compact? An alliance between you and me?"

"Why not? It is a thought which I had already entertained more than once, which took a more precise shape in the magistrates' corridor, and which finally decided me when I read the announcement which you caused to be made in the special edition of this paper: 'Sensational declaration by Don Luis Perenna. Mme. Fauville is innocent.'"

Gaston Sauverand half arose from his chair and, carefully picking his words, emphasizing them with sharp gestures, he whispered:

"Everything lies, monsieur, in those four words. Do those four words which you

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have written, which you have uttered publicly and solemnly—'Mme. Fauville is innocent'—do they express your real mind? Do you now absolutely believe in Marie Fauville's innocence?"

Don Luis shrugged his shoulders.

"Mme. Fauville's innocence has nothing to do with the case. It is a question not of her, but of you, of you two and myself. So come straight to the point, and as quickly as you can. It is to your interest even more than to mine."

"To our interest?"

"You forget the third heading to the article," cried Don Luis. "I did more than proclaim Marie Fauville's innocence. I also announced—read for yourself.—'Arrest of the criminals imminent.'"

Sauverand and Florence arose together, with the same unguarded movement.

"And, in your view, the criminals are——?" asked Sauverand.

"Why, you know as well as I do: they are the man with the ebony walking-stick, who at any rate can not deny having murdered Chief Inspector Ancenis, and the woman who is his accomplice in all his crimes. Both of them must remember their attempts to assassinate me—the revolver-shot on the Boulevard Suchet, the motor-smash causing the death of my chauffeur, and yesterday again, in the barn—you know where—the barn with the two skeletons hanging from the rafters; yesterday—you remember—the scythe, the relentless scythe, which nearly beheaded me."

"And then?"

"Well, then, the game is lost. You must pay up; and all the more so as you have foolishly put your heads into the lion's mouth."

"I don't understand. What does all this mean?"

"It simply means that they know Florence Levasseur, that they know you are both here, that the house is surrounded and that Weber, the deputy chief detective, is on his way."

Sauverand appeared disconcerted by this unexpected threat. Florence, standing beside him, had turned livid. A mad anguish distorted her features. She stammered:

"Oh, it is awful! No, no, I can't endure it!"

And, rushing at Don Luis:

"Coward! Coward! It's you who are betraying us! Coward! Oh, I knew that you were capable of the meanest treachery! There you stand, like an executioner! Oh, you villain, you coward!"

She fell into her chair, exhausted and sobbing, with her hands to her face.

DON LUIS turned away. Strange to say, he experienced no sense of pity; and Florence's tears affected him no more than her insults had done, no more than if he had never loved the girl. He was glad of this release. The horror with which she filled him had killed his love.

But, when he once more stood in front of them after taking a few steps across the room, he saw that they were holding each other's hands, like two friends in distress trying to give each other courage; and, again yielding to a sudden impulse of hatred, for a moment beside himself, he gripped the man's arm:

"I forbid you . . . By what right . . . ? Is she your wife? Then——"

His voice became perplexed. He himself felt the strangeness of that fit of anger which suddenly revealed, in all its force and all its blindness, a passion which he thought dead. And he blushed, for Gaston Sauverand was looking at him in amazement; and he did not doubt that the enemy had penetrated his secret.

A long pause followed, during which he met Florence's eyes—hostile eyes, full of rebellion and disdain. Had she too guessed?

He dared not speak another word. He waited for Sauverand's explanation. And while waiting, he gave not a thought to the coming revelations, nor to the tremendous problems of which he was at last about to know the solution, nor to the tragic events at hand.

He thought of one thing only, thought of it with the fevered throbbing of his whole being, thought of what he was on the point of learning about Florence, about the girl's affections, about her past, about her love for Sauverand. That alone interested him.

"Very well," said Sauverand. "I am caught in a trap. Fate must take its course. Nevertheless, can I speak to you? It is the only wish that remains to me."

"Speak," replied Don Luis. "The door is locked. I shall not open it until I think fit. Speak."

TO BE CONTINUED

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MR. POFFENBERGER AND THE PRESS

By Herbert C. Test

"THE unfortunate man was——' " Mrs. Edward Poffenberger paused with an air of dramatic impatience while she fluttered the sheets of the morning paper to reach the "turnover" that would end suspense concerning the fate of the object of her deep interest. She repeated the words mechanically as she located the continuation of the history.

" 'The unfortunate man was'—" here she picked up the thread of reportorial narrative—" 'almost dead from fright and shock. At the hospital, where he was rushed with all speed, the surgeons declare he has just a mere chance of recovery.' "

She sighed.

"I'd 'a' thought he'd been dead," she commented. "Wouldn't you?"

The interrogative was directed at Mr. Poffenberger, who, from his seat across the breakfast-table, was endeavoring to snatch accurate price-information set forth in a page advertisement of serge suits and straw hats which faced him for the moment.

"What's that?" he asked absently.

Mrs. Poffenberger turned back to the front page and the clothing ad. was swallowed up "inside," to the apparent regret of Mr. Poffenberger. The back page, now in his range of vision, contained only an invitation to smoke somebody's brand of cigarettes, and the cut-price list of a chain-store set in type too small to be readable from his place. He resumed his breakfast.

"This man was walking down the street," Mrs. Poffenberger continued, "and he stepped in a coal-hole. The coal-man, not knowing he was down there, put on the cover and—" she turned again to her journalistic source of information—" 'the victim of the near-tragedy lay for hours buried to his shoulders in the grimy, deadly grip of the subterranean mountain of pea-coal.' " She shivered pleasantly over the appealing horror. "Ain't it awful?"

"Sounds like a——"

Mr. Poffenberger halted his intention to impugn the veracity of the story—but he was too late. Mrs. Poffenberger slammed the paper down on the table, and the cups rattled in their saucers.

"Ed Poffenberger, don't be a fool!" Her tone implied a belief that obedience to her command might involve much self-restraint on the part of her husband. "It's right here in the *Yellow*. An' here's another account of a man that kissed his wife good-by at his front door an' disappeared as completely as though the earth swallowed him up. Maybe you think that's a lie, too? 'Neighbors on both sides of the pretty little cottage saw the last affectionate farewell.' " She was quoting again. " 'The entire force of city detectives have been placed on the trail and it is believed that a clew has been unearthed——' "

Her voice trailed off under stress of egoistic interest until no sound came from her eagerly moving lips. Another turn of the pages brought the sporting section opposite Mr. Poffenberger, who ate abstractedly, with optic nerves strained in an effort to make out the identity of ball-players pictured in dust-enveloped close play.

Mrs. Poffenberger broke into a chuckle.

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"Listen to this," she started. Mr. Poffenberger arose impatiently.

"I don't believe a thunderin' word of none of them!" he snapped forcibly. "Newspapers nowadays are filled up with——"

He paused because he saw that Mrs. Poffenberger was not listening. She had pounced on the woman's page and was carefully tearing out the pattern-coupon. Mr. Poffenberger stamped out to the hat-rack, slammed his hat on his head and started for the train.

Half way across the sash-factory lot Mr. Poffenberger was overtaken by Henry Lewis. Mr. Lewis was panting.

"H'lo, Poffenberger!" he gasped. He waved the *Mirror*. "Did y' read about this fellow in the paper? Come out of the theater—gets balled up—an' gets in the wrong taxi—pretty woman in there—he thinks it's his wife—woman puts up a yell—awful row—fellow pinched an'——"

"Pipe-dream, in my opinion!" Mr. Poffenberger interrupted sarcastically. The two men walked the remainder of the way to the station in silence.

Young Benny Jones, ambitious son of a suburban neighbor, was on the platform with a bundle of daily journals.

"Paper, Mr. Poffenberger?" he queried. "All about the——"

"NO!" Mr. Poffenberger's declination was shouted.

Mr. Poffenberger had hoped for a little auction pitch on the train. Instead he found the band of smoker-cronies from along the line perched on seats and side-arms giving rapt attention to something that Anderson Potts, the fat broker, was reading from the *Star*. Potts looked up.

"Poffenberger! Just the man we want!" he hailed. "Come here and settle an argument. I read here about a gink lost his memory an' been livin' two years in a boardin'-house two blocks from his own home. Didn't know it. Wife an' kids didn't know it. Cop on the beat didn't know it. These fellers say——"

Mr. Poffenberger fled into the next car.

IT NEEDED no skill at deduction to inform Mr. Poffenberger that he had arrived at the office ahead of his employer. When he opened the outer door he heard peals and guffaws of laughter from the accounting-room over which he was supposed to hold directive sway.

The entire force, from Tommy, the office-boy, to Miss Jennings, private secretary to the boss, were gathered around Roberts, the sales-head. Mr. Poffenberger hated Roberts; hated Roberts' lavender socks, Roberts' pink shirts, Roberts' red tie, and Roberts generally.

"Hello, Poffy!" Roberts called. "Say, I wonder if Poffy was one of 'em?" he questioned of the others.

"Start it over again for Mr. Poffenberger," Miss Jennings shrilled.

"*Morning Dispatch* has got a peach yarn here," Roberts declared. "Female impersonator up at the Winter Garden strings a lot of old guys in a trottery an' makes dates with 'em. Has about twenty of the old roosters all dolled up to keep a date at the theater that night. Every one of 'em strung out in one row, wearin' orchids. Yow! I'd like to have seen 'em when they tumbled!"

Mr. Poffenberger's pent-up rage against the morning's infliction of news broke restraining barriers.

"Darn tommyrot, 's what *I* think!" he growled. "Darn tommyrot!"

Roberts grinned.

"What's the matter, Poffy?" he queried soothingly. "Nurse, see if there's a pin stickin' in it anywheres."

The gibe added pain of wounded dignity to the wrench of Mr. Poffenberger's other wrongs. He banged his derby hat down on his desk and it bounded into the waste-basket. His advance was almost threatening.

"Nothin' but lies an' pipes an' dreams—an'—an'—in the papers nowadays!" he shouted half incoherently. "Lies! *Lies!* LIES!" He gathered breath.

"Might think from readin' 'em, every man, woman an' child in New York started out bughouse in the morning an' cut didoes 'till bedtime. All darn lies! If a man 'tends to his own business—goes to work—goes home—he's all right! Everybody do that an' we wouldn't need any cops; wouldn't be any troubles." He shook his fist impressively. "An' there wouldn't be any newspapers! Nothin' left for them to write about! Darn 'em!"

Members of the office force seemed impressed. They went to work.

Mr. Poffenberger's business with fellow employees was conducted across a barrier of reserve throughout the morning. At noon, in the soothing atmosphere of Schoonmayer's Rathskeller, he sought mental

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relief by elucidating his position to John Sickler, a luncheon-crony.

"I don't believe the newspapers," he insisted. "Things like they print couldn't happen. I——"

"Panned you once, didn't they?" Mr. Sickler asked jovially.

Mr. Poffenberger flushed. His memory flashed back to the loathed jar to his pride administered by a nimble-witted reporter.

Mr. Poffenberger had acted as toastmaster at the annual banquet of the Society of Expert Accountants. On that occasion he believed his address and his remarks anent the introduction of each speaker had been highly, if dignifiedly, clever.

He remembered that he had smiled patronizingly at the reporters. He had, in fact, intended to present each one with a copy of his address in which he had proved —to his own satisfaction—that he and his confrères at the board held the indispensable fingers of control on the buttons of modern business. The reporters, however, had disappeared while he was receiving congratulations of fellow accountants. He——

"Totted up just how much you ate an' printed the figures, didn't they?" Mr. Sickler broke the train of recollection.

"Infernal outrage!" Mr. Poffenberger snapped. "Made out that we had balanced up each mouthful with costs and that I cried over the showing on the balance-sheet." He looked around carefully to assure against others hearing. "—— 'em!" he hissed in final abhorrence.

"But, I tell you, these things couldn't happen," he resumed more calmly after another stein. "There's no truth——"

"Maybe," Mr. Sickler said judiciously. "Queer things come off, though. Now I read today—— . Gee, it's one forty-five!" he interrupted himself. "Back to the desk for mine."

Mr. Poffenberger martyred his feelings and sustained his principles of doubt as to journalistic veracity by open refusal to purchase a Wall Street edition when a newsboy made his office rounds. He withstood seduction of desire to scan the closing market-quotations even when delay in inspecting a final office-report left him alone in the office after five o'clock with a *Bulletin* lying temptingly open on a desk.

He was abstractedly donning his street-coat as he stepped into the tiled corridor. A cake of soap, neglected for a moment by a scrubwoman, lay just outside the office door. Mr. Poffenberger's heel hit it squarely.

MR. POFFENBERGER "came to" in a hospital ambulance. Mrs. Dugan, member of the cleaning-force, had screamed, "Fire!" when she saw Mr. Poffenberger describe a parabola and land on his head. It was the first alarm-cry that occurred to her.

The yell had been taken up along and down halls and stairways and relayed by scared tenants and cleaners to the street. Pending arrival of firemen, somebody had turned on the water in an emergency hose and started down the corridor, drenching the prostate Poffenberger. The ambulance surgeon, on his arrival, had decided to take Mr. Poffenberger to the hospital to settle the question of whether to treat for concussion of the brain or to attempt artificial resuscitation as for the drowned. Mr. Poffenberger could hear the chauffeur of the ambulance.

"Doc, that feller's only got a crack on the bean, ain't he? Them firemen was some sore when they found out it was only a scare because a round-foot skated on a cake of soap. The reporters give 'em a good laugh. Reckon they'll make him a millionaire in their stories, eh?"

A short session in the dispensary served to relieve Mr. Poffenberger of the pain in his head, but he was forced to tilt his hat rakishly to favor the bump. He dried his clothes before the open coal-grill in the kitchen.

When he left the hospital Mr. Poffenberger was unable to remember whether he had closed the office door. He returned to the building and found that the office door had been shut and locked by the janitor. Signs of recent excitement were gone.

Mr. Poffenberger entered the single all-night elevator. Two floors down it halted to admit a daintily attired girl. Mr. Poffenberger was looking at her approvingly. Suddenly the car dropped; then it halted with a thump and a raucous whine told of the emergency brake catching. The elevator man lay in a corner, cursing softly. The pretty girl had fainted into Mr. Poffenberger's arms.

Mr. Poffenberger heard shouts, then the ring of running on the tiles. A foot of open grill extended above the third-floor level.

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A crowd of building employees gathered. Among them Mr. Poffenberger sighted the impudent face of a grinning young man.

"Say, if it ain't Josephus Jinx, the Unlucky," the young man offered informatively. "Same guy that a cake of soap put to sleep on the tenth a while ago." He addressed Mr. Poffenberger through the grill.

"Give me your name, old man," he begged. "I'm a reporter on the *Era*."

Mr. Poffenberger maintained a discreet silence until the broken cable was spliced and the car lifted. The reporter left to go to the telephone.

"I'll give him a name that will carry the story all right," he told the spectators. "I know the girl. She's in the bindery on the eighth floor."

Mr. Poffenberger gallantly placed the young woman in a taxi secured by the superintendent of the building. He was annoyed, but treasured memory of the few seconds during which he had held her. He felt that the adventure had not been altogether displeasing, and concluded further that he did not mind the fact that dinner would be cleared away under orders of the inexorable Mrs. Poffenberger by the time of his delayed arrival at Myrtle Terrace. He decided to eat in the city.

The dinner in a tiled restaurant fully restored him. His clothes had dried completely and the bump on his head was going down. He approached the cashier's cage jauntily.

"Take seventy out of a dollar," he intoned as he laid down check and bill. He pushed the bill through the slot-like opening.

The cashier was a solidly built, young-old man, selected especially for the night trick. He swung open the brass wicket in his cage and, with the same motion, secured a good grip on Mr. Poffenberger's collar.

"Come across with real coin!" he ordered forcibly, waving the dollar bill in a fist that missed Mr. Poffenberger's nose by gradations of an inch. "This bean is the bummest queer I've had shot at me by one of you crooks since I been on the job."

Mr. Poffenberger tried to resist.

"It's a mistake," he pleaded. "I'm a respectable——"

"Take him away, Keg," the cashier instructed the fat policeman who had been hurriedly summoned by the waiter Mr. Poffenberger had failed to tip. "Be careful not to drop an' break him," he admonished further; "he's a gent in disguise. We'll make the complaint."

A world-weary desk-sergeant at the police station had demanded and received specific facts concerning the accusation and Mr. Poffenberger's age, nationality and past record; had brushed aside protestations of innocence with patient tolerance, and was about to send him to a cell when Mr. Poffenberger remembered.

He drew a wallet from his inside pocket. It contained eleven fifty-dollar certificates and some smaller bills which he intended to deposit in the suburban bank of which he had been made a director.

"Do I look like passin' a counterfeit dollar with this in my pocket?" he demanded, fear and suddenly sensed innocence struggling for mastery in his voice. "Do I?"

The sergeant reached out for the wallet and examined the bills.

"Potty, that stew up at the hashery'll get you in Dutch with his havin' people arrested some day," he declared, severely addressing the patrolman. "Beat it!" he told Mr. Poffenberger.

Mr. Poffenberger lingered.

"My name——You know——" he stammered.

"That's all right; didn't put it down—couldn't spell it nohow."

The sergeant turned away to welcome a police reporter coming out of a rear room.

"Nothin' to it, Callahan," he stated. "Might as well go back an' buy a new stack. Just a solid citizen forgot he had a pants pocket full of kale an' let himself get pinched for crossin' a home-made buck. No story."

The reporter exhibited disappointment.

"Pshaw, that ain't so bad on a dull night. Got his name?"

The Sergeant grunted.

"Piddleberry or somethin' like that," he said. "Call 'im that, anyhow."

MR. POFFENBERGER fully intended to walk out of the police station in a manner commensurate with his dignity as an outraged citizen. Instead, he found himself hurrying.

He even peered over his shoulder at intervals to make sure that he was not being "shadowed." He had heard somewhere of such procedure being adopted by the police when balked of their prey. His conscious

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sense of rectitude was not proof against the influence of lifelong fear of the so-called guardians of the peace. Only newspapermen and politicians are entirely free from this species of awe. He elected to turn down a shadowy side-street.

Mr. Poffenberger heard a scream. He saw a girl running toward him, coming out of the shadows cast by the high-stooped houses. She cast herself into his arms.

"Save me! Save me!" she cried.

Mr. Poffenberger felt a pleasing thrill of knight-errantry.

"There, there," he said comfortingly, pattir g her on the shoulder. "What's——"

In several confusing moments Mr. Poffenberger gathered that the young woman was fleeing from a man; that the arrival of Mr. Poffenberger had saved her from a horrible fate; that she thanked him; that her parents thanked him; that his providential and manly interference in behalf of threatened womanhood automatically operated to place him among the heroes of the time.

Mr. Poffenberger could have stood hours of the same sobbed explanations and praises, but it seemed that the young woman must hurry along. She explained to Mr. Poffenberger that he could best serve by remaining where he was and preventing pursuit.

Sighting along the trembling finger of the girl, Mr. Poffenberger was able to make out the figure of the man who had caused the trouble and who stood in the deep shadow half way down the block. He was implored to watch this man at all hazards. He promised. The girl thanked him again and slipped around the corner. Then Mr. Poffenberger discovered that his wallet was gone.

Mr. Poffenberger appealed to Patrolman Burke, whom he found after frenzied search. In parlance of the force, as expressed by Patrolman Burke, he "beefed." Patrolman Burke showed but casual interest until Mr. Poffenberger named the amount of money in the wallet.

"Come on," he said then, his tone authoritative.

Mr. Poffenberger and Patrolman Burke made their way to the back room of a small and evil-smelling saloon. The bartender brought two whiskies.

"You pay for 'em," Patrolman Burke instructed rather than commanded Mr. Poffenberger.

There was a 'phone on the wall. Patrolman Burke, before he unhooked the receiver, nodded to the bartender. Acting as if by instinct, several slinky-appearing youths and slim-skirted girls arose from the tables and departed. Patrolman Burke spoke into the 'phone.

"Hello, sarge! That you? Say, sarge, this is Burke—twenty-six beat. Say, sarge, Sympathy Mag an' some new feller she's got is workin' up here." His tone became querulous. "I think you're handin' me something to let them stall on my beat with my hearin' on charges comin' up Tuesday."

He listened.

"Yes, a poke. Skinned it off a tired business man. He didn't see Mag's pardner; but I think it's likely Slim Eddy or that feller we had last week on that purse-grabbin' job. They'll divvy at the Empire dance-hall, I think, 'cause Mag'll want to reach Pale Jimmy an' get some coke. Will you call up an' tell 'em to send it back, or shall I go 'round there? I'm talkin' from Finnegan's."

He listened again.

"Well, you tell her that if I have to come over there I'll beat up her buddy an' lock her up sure as——What's that? Certainly I'll make a report. Credit me with the recovery, too, will you, sarge? All right—good-by."

"Wait!" he ordered, turning to Mr. Poffenberger.

In about twenty minutes a rat-eyed youngster slid noiselessly into the room. He made no sign of greeting or recognition, but handed the lost wallet to Patrolman Burke. Mr. Poffenberger needed but one glance to assure him that his money was intact. In an excess of generosity he took out a ten-dollar bill and handed it to Patrolman Burke, who folded it carefully and raised his coat to slip it into a vest pocket.

"I'll call you Smith in my report," he told Mr. Poffenberger. "That real name of yours might queer you if it got in the papers," he explained.

MR. POFFENBERGER pondered vaguely over the incident and clutched his retrieved treasure as he hurried along the street. A glance at his watch told him that he had twenty minutes in which to catch the ten forty-two. He decided to ride.

A more observant or a more sophisticated citizen might have realized the potential

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possibilities of trouble in the forward section of the car. He might have wondered why the majority of passengers were huddled in seats and aisle of the rear end, while at least eight double seats in front were in possession of a half dozen sprawled young men who had reversed each alternate wicker back to give support to elevated feet.

Mr. Poffenberger could hardly know that the jauntily dressed young men belonged to a newly formed but already dreaded uptown "gang" on their way to a "racket," and deeply intent on impressing the traveling public with their contempt for all regulatory laws. Mr. Poffenberger was tired and desired to sit down—therefore he walked forward and dropped into a seat alongside one of the sprawlers.

The young men had been singing, their ode laudatory to Home and Mother. The singing halted abruptly; the sudden silence was ominous.

Events immediately subsequent can best be told in verbatim report of John Patterson, occupation plumber, a witness before the Night Court.

"You see, Judge your Honor, we're on this Third Av'noo flat-wheel; I'm on the back platform. I sees these fellers hoggin' th' car, but I think they're gunmen. Anyhow, I ain't hornin' in. When I sees this little old guy with th' glasses buttin' into a seat I says to another feller with me, says I, 'He'll get his,' says I.

"Well, Judge your Honor, that guy with th' skinned nose there in th' dock he makes a swing at th' old guy, usin' his open hand. Man! You could hear him wallop th' old man's face half way to Harlem.

"I says to th' feller with me on th' platform—yes, sir, Judge your Honor, I'm tellin' th' facts as fast as I kin—next thing I sees this little old guy's got a cane—that's it, busted on th' desk there—an' he's swingin' like a gate, gettin' one of them guys every wallop when he ain't smashin' out a winder-light.

"When the motorman—Number 4772 he was—gets in with th' handle, an' th' conductor pushes up with a 'jack he digs up somewheres, th' thing's over—the little old guy's got 'em all buffaloed with their sponges in th' air. An' th' little old guy's still at 'em. Why, Judge your Honor, when th' cops come they had to pry this old guy off them there four-flushin' boobs. They wasn't no more gunmen than you are!"

Mr. Poffenberger received the scowls of the thoroughly cowed young bullies, the plaudits of the admiring witnesses and the praise of the Judge in silence. He was still dazed. He remembered the slap—his lower lip was cut. Since that moment his memory impressions might have been likened to pictures thrown by a runaway "movie" machine.

He had a dim recollection of having grasped an apparently light and limber cane from his bellicose seatmate and of having realized an atavistic joy in discovery that the cane head was so weighted with molded lead as to make it a formidably deadly weapon.

Somewhere in his mentality there remained a memory of delightful thrill as he laid around him and saw one after another of his assailants go down. He remembered a sense of unalloyed pleasure at seeing blood spurt from the head of the dark-skinned youth—now whimpering and holding a handkerchief to the wound as he stood in the dock—when he, Edward Poffenberger, had been able to step back and exercise a full-arm swing.

Then the arrival of big men in uniform. The respectful request that he ride to the Night Court in a taxicab to appear against the rowdies—who traveled in a patrol-wagon. All was vague, and Mr. Poffenberger, as he mechanically promised attendance at a further hearing, became conscious of the fact that he was becoming sleepy, and he recognized a twinge of rheumatism in his right arm.

A court officer escorted Mr. Poffenberger to the street. On his way he was requested to spell out his name for the benefit of a knot of reporters who accompanied him. He entered the taxicab which awaited him.

"Pennsylvania Station," he said wearily.

TO A MAN of Mr. Poffenberger's regular habits five hours' sleep was not sufficient for full recuperation after his strenuous evening. He overslept nearly an hour. He essayed to spring to his feet as he glimpsed the time from the watch hanging on the headboard, but was forced to ease aching muscles as he stepped out of bed. He felt his lip and secured comfort of assurance that the cut had closed.

His head, however, gave him the most trouble.

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"Gosh! My head's swelled up like a poisoned pup," he said aloud; then he raged inwardly as he recognized the quotation as a favored self-descriptive phrase much used by the roistering Roberts.

He examined his head with the aid of his triple shaving-mirror. The bump received when he crashed to the tile floor of the office hallway had left but a faint abrasion, which he carefully covered by manipulation of his sparse gray hair.

Suddenly he remembered. Into the train of recollection of the events of the night before projected the thought of the newspapers. He shivered. Now he recalled the almost constant presence of reporters during his evening of startling events. His hand trembled so that he nicked his ear with the razor-point.

He would surely be held up to ridicule or worse. Cynical comments emanating from the young gentlemen of the press with whom he had been in contact came back to him with startling distinctness. He attempted to strop his razor, and the handle turned in his clammy palm, allowing the blade to slice the leather neatly in two. Mr. Poffenberger wondered what the papers would say.

Obsessive apprehension hurried Mr. Poffenberger downstairs. He pondered possibility of securing the domestic source of daily news, represented by the *Citizen*, and searching its columns to ascertain the extent of exploitation awarded his mishaps. He hoped to be able to secrete, or even destroy, the sensation-mongering daily.

He was too late. Mrs. Poffenberger had already secured the paper, and was delightedly mumbling details of a particularly salacious divorce story. Then Mr. Poffenberger essayed guile.

"Ha, hum! May I have the paper, my dear?" he requested. He held out his hand. "Want to see how Steel——"

"Get one in town," Mrs. Poffenberger said carelessly. She glanced at the extended hand and Mr. Poffenberger withdrew it hastily. "I want to read this about the newest high-life divorce over again. Eat your breakfast."

Mr. Poffenberger found that he was not hungry. He cracked an egg in forlorn hope that he might be able to eat it. Mrs. Poffenberger chuckled.

"Oh, Ed, here's a joke!" she said happily. "Here's a joke! What do you think of two fire companies turning out to rescue a man that only slipped on a cake of soap?" She read on for a moment, silently. "Why, Ed, it was right in your building. What——"

"Umph!" Mr. Poffenberger interrupted expressively. "Got up hour late! Got t' rush." He fled along the hall, while Mrs. Poffenberger resumed her reading.

Henry Lewis was just ahead when Mr. Poffenberger reached the street. He was conning his folded *Mirror* as he walked. At sight of the much-desired paper Mr. Poffenberger experienced something of the sensation of a dog desirous of a bone. He hurried and made a tentative grab at the paper as he spoke.

"Lend me your *Mirror*, Lewis, will you?" he pleaded. "Want to see——"

Lewis drew the paper out of reach.

"In just a minute, Poffenberger," he parried. "Soon's I finish this piece here about——"

He laughed.

"Why, there must 'a' been something doin' in your place after you left last night. Article in my *Mirror* here says an old gent an' a pretty girl filing-clerk were in a jammed elevator for an hour. Says old party just fell all over himself comfortin' the little dame. Held her head on his shoulder an' all that." He read closely.

"Listen!" he demanded of Mr. Poffenberger. " 'Reliable witnesses claim that the elderly gentleman offered bribes to hurriedly summoned workmen to delay repairs for another hour. It is said that the man is a millionaire head of a big brokerage firm, and that a romance may result.' Some fly old sport; eh, Pof——"

He talked to space. Mr. Poffenberger was half way across the lot and running.

"Gosh! We must be late," Mr. Lewis surmised.

Mr. Poffenberger was almost breathless when he reached the platform. He hailed young Benny Jones huskily.

"Gimme the *Mirror*, *Yellow*, *Star*, *Argus*, *Era*——"

"Got nothin' to spare this morning but the *Morgenblatt*," Benny Jones returned casually. He was not fond of Mr. Poffenberger, because of former rebuffs. "All the rest engaged. Mr. Weisheim's sick this morning, so he won't be here to get his Dutch sheet."

"Don't want it!" Mr. Poffenberger snapped. He was in no mood to struggle

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through the news in his almost forgotten mother-tongue.

The auction-pitch game was in halting progress in the smoker. Spurts of acrimonious discussion caused frequent breaks. Just as Mr. Poffenberger entered Anderson Potts laid down his *Star* to take up his hand. Mr. Poffenberger started toward it hopefully—and Anderson Potts grabbed it up.

"Look, Poffenberger!" he commanded. "I've been tryin' to tell these little hurry-homes that anybody but a bonehead that was never on Broadway after the five-eleven pulled out would 'a' give that cashier a dollar to make themselves good an' then pulled him through the window an' beat 'im up. These fellers are roastin' the police for arrestin' a man in Kelly's lunch-place last night for passin' a bum simoleon, when he had a half peck of real Government-make yellow-backs on him," he explained. "It's in the *Star* here. How could the cop know——"

He stopped. Mr. Poffenberger had passed on.

"Poffenberger's gettin' to be a real grouch, eh?" he remarked. "Guess he must have a hen on in that other car." He picked up his cards. "Well, Billings, name the baby—what's trumps?" he asked.

A sequence of incidents that seemed helmed by unpropitious Fate prevented Mr. Poffenberger from securing a metropolitan daily on his way to the office. Dreading further intercourse with Anderson Potts and his commuter-companions, Mr. Poffenberger decided not to risk their overtaking him by stopping at the terminal newsstand. The half score free-lance newsboys in the street appeared intent on forcing their wares on members of a just-arrived party of tourists half a block away.

In the subway car Mr. Poffenberger managed to work a discarded paper along the floor with his feet into reach of his hand, only to discover that it was an up-State weekly with a "patent inside." The senior partner was buying a cigar at the newsstand in the office building, and Mr. Poffenberger did not stop.

Final hope that he might be able to snatch a glance at Roberts' usually despised *Morning Dispatch* was dashed when Mr. Poffenberger entered the office. Mr. Brown, the junior partner, lay back in his chair laughing immoderately; Miss Jennings had suspended typewriter-operation and was grinning broadly, and clerks had delayed genesis of the day's work while Roberts read aloud.

" 'She had already lifted the Foxy Grandpa's watch, pin and the wallet in which the suburban old sport had wadded some nine hundred dollars,' " he quoted, " 'when Patrolman Burke turned the corner. It is suspicioned that she would have purloined the new porous plaster from the sporty old gentleman's lame shoulder had she been given a few minutes more time.' Ha, I'll bet Bill Clemence wrote that!" Roberts interjected. " 'Both the girl and her accomplice fled, but Patrolman Burke, after an hour of hard work, rounded them up and secured every jit of our aged hero's money.' "

Mr. Poffenberger, hurrying through the room to his own department, was fascinated into listening.

" 'According to the police,' " Roberts continued his reading, " 'they are having their own troubles taking care of the old men who drift into the city intent on splurging.

" ' "There's been a regular epidemic of aged snoozers with one foot in the grave cavorting around after dark when they ought to be home winding the clock and putting the cat out," says the always terse Police Captain Mulligan. " 'You can't blame the fly girls for trimming them when they start out to hit the high places and think every Jane they meet is in love with them. If this old duck hadn't tried to make a mash——" ' "

"It's a lie!"

Mr. Poffenberger made the distance from his desk-chair to the doorway in one leap. His face was contorted with rage.

"It's a lie, I say! Why, I——"

"Go chase yourself," Roberts interrupted. "What do you know about it? Somebody hunt up Poffy's *Youth's Companion*," he suggested. He turned to the junior partner. "The old sport that was in that mix-up was wily enough to give his monaker as Smith instead of his own name," he told his employer.

Mr. Poffenberger subsided. His hands trembled as he worked, and he fumed when he dropped a blob of ink on the page of a file-book and was forced to copy the numbers on a clean sheet to insert in its place. Others in the office ignored him shamelessly.

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AT NOON he found John Sickler clutching an *Evening Yellow*. Mr. Sickler seemed anxious for his arrival. "Say, Poffenberger," he spoke sagely, "I'm here to argue with you about what you said yesterday, that queer things couldn't happen right here in New York. Here's——"

"I said they're all infernal——" Mr. Poffenberger began hotly, and hesitated. He flushed guiltily. "Well," he qualified, "what I meant was that the newspapers never get things straight. That's what I meant. All them reporters do is to make fun of decent, respectable people——"

"Stop right there!" Mr. Sickler commanded. "Stop right there, an' I'll prove you're wrong for the Würzburgers. There's an account right here in my *Yellow* of a man that licked a bunch of young tough squirts on a Third Avenue car last night, an' I want to tell you they give him some fine send-off. Listen!" Mr. Sickler read. With all the fulsome detail and added word-embroidery, possible only to the skilled writer with a subject beloved, the story ran on.

It told of the "gravely dignified" attitude of the plain but heroic citizen who ignored danger to assert his rights—and Mr. Poffenberger, suddenly awakened to the possibilities of newspaper laudation, thrilled with pleasure.

It related the attack made by the ruffians, and Mr. Poffenberger felt his lip and waited expectantly. When Mr. Sickler brandished his beer-mug to illustrate the telling blows administered by the fearless citizen in quelling the ebullient fighting-spirit of the roughs Mr. Poffenberger beamed, and enjoyed a clandestine feel of his biceps.

The scene in court, the congratulations of the Judge, the applause of spectators, all were limned in broad, glowing strokes of literary description. Mr. Sickler paused.

"That old guy was some class—believe me!" he ejaculated.

Mr. Poffenberger swelled with pride. He suppressed with effort a desire to whoop forth his pæan of self-adulation, and awaited the dénouement that would show his friend Sickler that the usually gentle Poffenberger was of a piece with heroes. He spoke with difficultly managed lack of concern.

"Oh, it wasn't so much," he said with modest pride. "Any man with good red blood in his veins——"

Mr. Sickler turned on Mr. Poffenberger.

"Not much?" he snarled. "Look a' here, Poffenberger, you get tiresome. It ain't much, eh, to lick a lot o' young murderers an'——What do you know about it anyhow?" he snapped.

Mr. Poffenberger was perfectly cool. He smiled with gentle condescension. "What do I know about it, Sickler, old boy? What do I know about it?" he reiterated with emphasis. "Well, John, for once I can testify that the papers sometimes get things *all right!*" He rapped on the table.

"The beers are on me," he admitted with poor attempt at humility. He leaned back and placed his arms akimbo. "Read on, Mr. Sickler," he instructed with exaggerated dignity. "Read on! What was the hero's name?" Mr. Sickler complied.

"S-c-o—Sco-ben-fer-ber," he pronounced carefully. "Elwood Scoben——"

He stopped, interrupted by a gasping groan. Mr. Poffenberger had fainted.

All in the Point of View

By A. Judson Hanna

THE MOSLEM

"BROTHER, well struck! May thy reward be great.
So perish every white-faced infidel!
Our lord Mohammed open thee the gate,
And lead thee in to Paradise to dwell."

"TOMMIE ATKINS"

"Aye, fairish shot, that; seven hundred clean.
Wager the bounder felt it bleedin' well!
Hi! Got another—plugged him square between
The eyes. That makes two 'eathen gone to 'ell."

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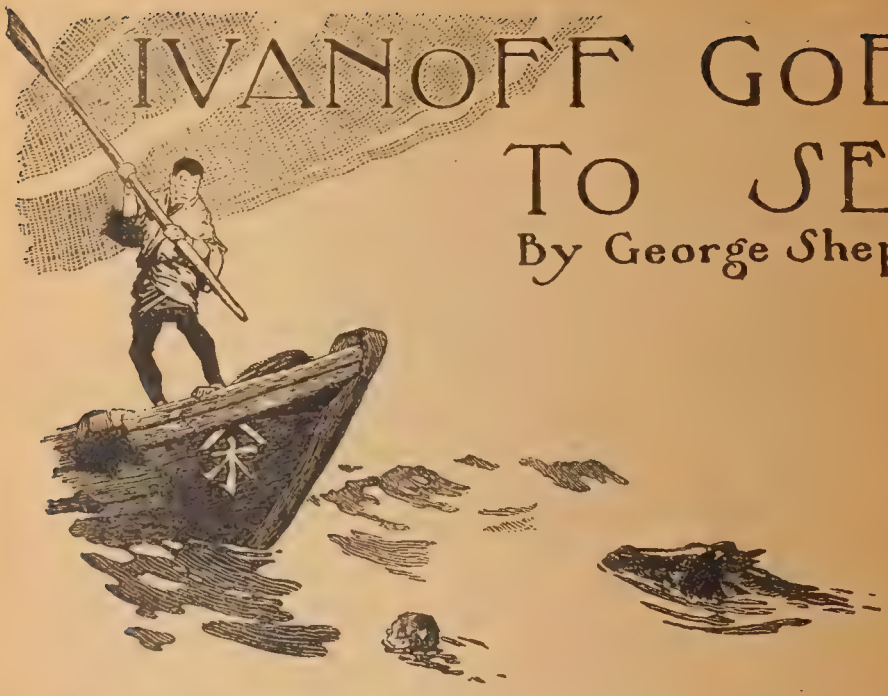

IVANOFF GOES TO SEA

By George Shepherd

SWARTHY, chunky little Jap with an intelligent but surly-looking face lounged about in the corral of Donald MacIntyre's Hawaiian ranch. He was examining, in a speculative sort of way—not with any friendliness at all—a beautiful, clean-limbed black horse which was hitched to a post waiting for his morning grooming.

Presently the man drew closer and began to run his hand over the animal's flank. The horse, resenting the impertinence, kicked him. When the man got to his feet he grabbed the first stick he could find and began to beat the horse.

Then there ran out of the stable-door a slender youth with flashing eyes. He wrenched the stick away from the Jap and proceeded to hammer him with it most lustily. He belabored him on the head, on the back, on the legs, anywhere he could hit him, until the man made his escape through a hole in the fence.

As the Jap reached safety he turned his face for a moment on his aggressor; and it was no longer merely surly, but indescribably evil and vicious. But the other did not appear to be at all worried. He was not one to bother himself because he had made a vindictive enemy. He went back and spoke to the horse.

"Gunpowder, my valiant one," he said in Russian, "it had been better had you kicked harder. But never fear. He will not come back again."

Over in the office the manager of MacIntyre's ranch (principality might be a better word, for many a sovereign State is of less extent) opened the mail-bag and sorted over its contents. Presently he came to a letter addressed to him in MacIntyre's own handwriting. He opened and read it.

"Hey, boy!" he called to an overgrown, clumsy Hawaiian youth who loafed outside. "Find Ivanoff and send him here."

The boy scurried away toward the stables, his bare feet kicking up prodigious clouds of the red dust that lay inches deep on the road. In a minute there appeared in the office-door the same man who had just given the inquisitive Jap such a well deserved beating. He was a slender, yellow-skinned young fellow with high, prominent cheek-bones and black eyes. When he took off his battered felt hat he showed a thick crop of wiry black hair and a width and height of forehead which contrasted oddly with what

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seemed to be the dumb stupidity of his manner and expression.

"Ivanoff," said the manager, "Mr. MacIntyre over in Honolulu wants you."

A gleam came into Ivanoff's eyes, and his face lit up and became a little less stupid-looking.

"Yes, sir," he said.

"I wonder what it would be like to be worshiped by a human being the way that man does MacIntyre," thought the manager. Aloud he said, "Yes, Mr. MacIntyre says you are to come at once and bring Gunpowder with you."

Ivanoff's eyes fairly sparkled.

"Gunpowder!" he repeated in the tone a boy uses when he speaks the name of his first beloved. "Yes, sir. I go now?" he asked.

"Yes," answered the manager. "You can ride down to the coast, and I'll telephone for them to give you passage and see that you and the horse get aboard all right. The boat leaves tonight, so you had better start right off. Come in again before you leave, though."

Ivanoff went back to the stables to make the horse ready for the trip. He himself would have marched out of the door and begun a trip to the Equator or the North Pole (if he had known such places existed) without fuss or ceremony. But with Gunpowder, the most wonderful horse which had ever been foaled since horses began to be, it was different.

He must have an extra mouthful of oats, his shoes must be looked to, his black satiny coat must be given a final rub, and then there must be explanations made to him—voluble, affectionate Russian whispered into his ear. It was quite necessary that the horse be told that the master needed them; the master who, Ivanoff firmly believed, owned his body just as he commanded his love and loyalty.

He was a very medieval sort of fellow, was this descendant of the wild Turkoman nomads, who had been born in Russia and transplanted to the Hawaiian Islands. For instance, he never could quite fathom the foolish formality by which his master always gave him a sum of money at the end of the month. He never needed it, for he always had food and shelter and clothing from the master; small sums of money, too, when he asked for them. So of course he always handed it back and said he did not want it; and remained in complete ignorance of the gradually swelling account which stood on the ranch-books under the name of I. Ivanoff.

While Ivanoff was getting the horse ready the manager wrote a short letter to his chief. Because he could lay his hand on no other he slipped it into a long, important-looking envelope; and because there was no paste handy he sealed it with a generous splash of important-looking red sealing-wax.

In a few minutes Ivanoff returned.

"Here you are," said the manager. "Give this to Mr. MacIntyre. Be sure you don't forget now. And as soon as you get there, too."

Ivanoff, taking the big, red-sealed envelope in his hand, saw at once the reason for the sudden call to his master. It was some despatch of tremendous import; something that concerned the fate of one of the principalities of which his master was the lord—for the ranch was but one of MacIntyre's possessions. Perhaps it was something to do with the woman who was soon to be his master's wife, whose life Ivanoff had once saved so that she might live to marry him. And he, Ivanoff, was to bear this document! The master himself had sent the word. To what greater honor could he aspire?

IVANOFF did the fifteen miles to the coast at a slow pace. There was plenty of time to catch the steamer, so it was foolish to call on the willing Gunpowder for unnecessary effort. Hence he never overtook the chunky little Jap with the surly face who, starting a while before him, traveled the same road on foot.

Yamamoto reached the little port a few minutes before Ivanoff, and from behind the windows of his friend Watanabe's drinking-place he was astonished to see the Russian slowly jog by on Gunpowder, sitting lightly and crooning softly to the horse in time to the even hoofbeats.

Ivanoff went first to the office of the steamship.

"We'll put you aboard in an hour," said the man in charge. So Ivanoff took Gunpowder to the shade of an immense ceiba, gave him his oats and squatted in front of him to watch him eat. From time to time Ivanoff felt to make sure that the letter he carried inside his shirt was safe.

"Eat well," he commanded the horse,

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"for tonight we go across the water Then tomorrow or the day after, who knows how many leagues we may have to travel for the master?"

Meanwhile Yamamoto had wandered down to the shipping-office and interviewed a Japanese clerk whom he knew there. After the elaborate exchange of salutations and honorifics was finished the conversation was very brief.

"And the moon-faced Russian with his black devil-horse, where does he go?" asked Yamamoto.

"Tonight on the steamer to Honolulu," replied the clerk.

And as that was all Yamamoto wanted to know, he returned to Watanabe's place.

"Watanabe," he said, "the crew of this steamer *Waialua*, they come here to drink their *sake?*"

"Yes," replied Watanabe, "sometimes."

"Then see that some of them come in this afternoon before the steamer leaves," directed Yamamoto, who seemed to be a person of authority with his own race.

HALF an hour later half a dozen stokers and oilers of the *Waialua* came in, and Yamamoto bought them beer or *sake*. He conversed casually with them all for a while, and then picked out one for a very earnest *tête-à-tête*.

Shortly before dark Gunpowder, his clean slender legs carefully swathed in soft woolen bandages, was led up a broad gangway to the deck of a lighter. The horse walked mincingly, his ears pricked forward and little shivers running over his body. But still there was nothing to be afraid of, for was not Ivanoff holding the halter-strap and going ahead of him? And when had he ever been hurt when Ivanoff was near?

They put him in a big box ready on the lighter's deck—a sort of a portable stall open at the top and well padded on the inside. The barge was rowed out to the little steamer and lashed alongside. Then they hooked a cable, which dropped from a projecting boom, into the sling which had been passed around the stall and slowly began to raise it.

Ivanoff, phlegmatic and slow-witted as he was, began to have nervous tremors at the sight of Gunpowder swinging between sea and sky. He hastily scrambled up to the deck of the steamer to be on hand the instant the box should be safely lowered on the ship. While he waited he stood by the hoisting-winch.

Around the drum of the winch the man who was running it had taken three turns of the cable. From there it led to a block at the foot of the mast close by, thence up the mast to the boom, through another block and out to the end of the boom. As the drum revolved, the friction of the three turns around it kept the cable from slipping and the winch-runner gathered in the free end as it came off.

Slowly the heavy box with the terrified horse inside it rose in the air. Finally it came high enough to be swung inboard, and Ivanoff allowed himself a single sharply taken breath.

Just at that moment a Japanese oiler came along. In his hand he had an open tin of oil, with which he was going to fill an oil-can which stood underneath the winch. As he stepped toward it he stumbled and the oil spilled over the drum. Still turning, in a second its surface was covered with a film of oil.

The cable began to slip. The winchman braced his feet, gripped the free end with both hands, and straightened back in his effort to hold it. But from the other end dangled a four-hundred-pound stall which held a nine-hundred-pound horse; and the oily, slippery surface of the drum would not grip. At first slowly, and then a little faster, the box began to drop.

The men on the lighter below yelled and jumped clear. Ivanoff yelled—the same wild barbaric cry his untamed Turkoman ancestors might have given as they charged home on a Russian square. And as he yelled he jumped.

Exactly what happened was never made clear. The Japanese oiler swore that Ivanoff leaped on him with the fury of ten thousand devils, knocked him over, grabbed his arm and forced it into the sheave of the block at the foot of the mast.

The Captain was watching from the bridge. He was a California-bred man, disliked Japs, and was proud of his reputation for always carrying cargo safely. He declared that Ivanoff jumped to grab the line, and the Jap being in his way was knocked over and his arm got caught in the block.

Ivanoff would say nothing at all. His English was unequal to the task of explaining anything so complicated. At any rate, what resulted was that the line was jammed

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in the block. A considerable amount of flesh was torn off the oiler's forearm and both bones were broken. But before he was extricated and the line allowed to run free the winch-runner had the quickness of wit to throw a double handful of sand on the drum and stop the slipping.

The Captain said that he was no sea-lawyer, but it looked to him as if the same man who nearly caused the accident was the means of preventing it, and there was no use going any farther with the business. The best thing to do was to send the man ashore to his friends and thank the Lord they hadn't killed a valuable horse.

Over in Watanabe's place Yamamoto shrugged his shoulders unsympathetically when the oiler was brought in. He showed even less commiseration when he heard the man's story.

"Bungler!" was his only remark.

"I think I will go over to Honolulu," he said after a while. "Perhaps there I may find another chance. It is not well to leave such things unfinished."

He went off to look up some fishermen friends of his who, he had heard, were leaving that night to take their catch to Honolulu in a fast motor sampan. With them he easily made arrangements for a passage.

BY THE time Yamamoto chug-chugged out of the harbor that night the *Waialua* had already crept ten miles up the coast. On her fore-deck Ivanoff, feeling once more to make sure that the precious dispatch he bore was safe, stretched out to sleep alongside Gunpowder's stall.

The little vessel leisurely churned her way through the placid, moonlit sea. At four in the morning, the mate, a half-caste Hawaiian, relieved the Captain on the bridge. Navigating was easy work on a night like this, so the mate paced back and forth across the bridge, singing softly to himself and dreaming away the time—as his race has ever done, until it has sung and dreamed itself from a living nation to the mere memory of one.

At five o'clock he felt a slight jolt under his feet. The ship shivered for an instant and went smoothly on. Walking to the side, he looked over and saw an immense piece of driftwood slipping by. The mast of some schooner, it looked like, or perhaps a telegraph-pole or piece of piling which had gone overboard from the deck-load of some lumber-ship. He walked back, humming a Hawaiian love-song.

Presently the Captain's tousled gray head appeared up the companionway.

"What did she hit just now, Mr. Kawei?" he asked, without stepping up on the bridge.

"Oh, just a piece of driftwood, sir."

"Everything all right?"

"All right, sir," answered the mate.

The Captain went back to his cabin, but once having been aroused he found it hard to sleep again. Soon he felt thirsty. He got up and drew a glass of water from the cooler which stood in the corner of his room. As the glass slowly filled he noticed that the surface of the water in it did not rise squarely to the top. Instead it seemed to have a little slope, so that when it reached the top at one edge it was still a fraction of an inch down on the opposite side. Nor did the slope change from side to side as it does when a vessel pitches in a seaway.

The Captain did not wait to drink. With one bound he was out of the room. With three more he was on the bridge.

"She's down by the head!" he called to the mate. "Call the hands and stand by while I go and look."

The mate's whistle shrilled out in the calm, still night air, and in a moment the Kanaka deckhands came tumbling out of the fo'c's'le, rubbing their eyes and wondering what all the hubbub was about. The Captain, already down on the deck, seized the first two who appeared and tore off the forward hatch. Grabbing a lantern, he slid down the ladder into the hold.

In a minute he was back on the bridge. He moved quickly and spoke quickly, but his voice was steady and self-possessed.

"She's tore off I don't know how many plates," he told the mate. "Anyhow, too many to do anything. She'll flood the fires in ten minutes and go down in another fifteen." He paused for an instant. "Get the purser and the steward," he went on even more quietly. "Tell 'em to keep the passengers in hand. And you put all hands to clearing away the boats. Quick, now!"

Twenty-five minutes may be ample time to lower three boats and put fifty people in when it is done aboard a man-of-war or a crack liner with a smart, well drilled crew. But the case is different on a little island steamer which carries but one competent

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deck-officer and one white engineer, and has a crew of undisciplined Kanakas and Japanese. On the *Waialua* they had little time to spare.

The davits jammed; the falls got tangled; some of the oars and other small gear had been misplaced. One boat even was lowered without the plug being put in, and had to be hoisted again and tilted to get the water out. The crew, frantic with fear and half out of hand, were held to their work by the Captain with a revolver and the Chief Engineer with a spanner.

The nondescript, motley crowd of passengers were controlled not by the steward or purser, but by an Army officer who happened to be aboard, returning from a tour of the islands. He managed to convince them that the danger of drowning was as nothing compared to the danger of being shot should they make a rush for the boats. After the first few minutes the lights went out, and they had to work by the feeble light of a few glimmering lanterns.

Finally the boats were in the water, and the crew and passengers got in them. The mate's boat pulled away first. In a few strokes it was lost in the darkness.

"Due east, Mr. Kawei," called the Captain. "Dawn should bring you to the coast. It's only a few miles."

A flicker of light showed as the mate struck a match to look at his compass. Then the Chief Engineer's boat rowed off, and finally the Captain's cleared away. As he left the side of the ship he called to the Chief:

"Mac, there! Have you got that crazy Russian who had the horse there with you? I haven't noticed him for a spell."

"Not here, sir," answered the Chief. "I'll ask the mate."

He repeated the Captain's question to the mate's boat, a hundred yards away. Mr. Kawei, thinking he was being cautioned again as to his course, called cheerily back, "Yes, sir!"

"All right, sir," shouted the Chief to the skipper.

"Give way," said the Captain to the men at the oars; and the last boat sheered away from the sinking *Waialua*.

On the fore-deck—the boats had all got away from astern—was Ivanoff, struggling with a crowbar to break down the side of the stall in which Gunpowder was confined. As he pried and wrenched at the heavy timbers he talked soothingly to the horse.

"Steady, my pet; have patience yet a little." With grunting effort he worked loose one of the heavy cross-bars. "Now soon shall we be free. And remember that I did not think when I spoke harshly just now because you would not back out of the stall as I directed."

Using the bar as a lever he pried out the center upright, which brought with it all of the remaining framework of the side. The horse leaned his weight against the other wall of the stall as the ship tilted down a little more by the head. At their feet the lapping water had crept almost flush with the deck.

Again Ivanoff addressed the horse—for he firmly believed the animal understood every word he spoke.

"So! Now we can step out." He leaned over and grasped him by one foreleg, actually to place his feet for him. His hand felt the heavy protective bandages. How could the horse swim with those?

For an instant Ivanoff was panic-stricken, for the time was very short. He dropped on his knees and began deftly and quickly to unroll them. When the first was half off the bundle slipped from his hand and, unrolling, became tangled in the horse's legs. He drew his clasp knife, cut it free, and went on unwrapping. But he had lost a score of precious seconds. The deck was more slanting and the water but a few inches below them.

Each of the four bandages seemed longer than the one before, and it seemed to Ivanoff that his hurrying fingers grew slower and more awkward; until he almost despaired of finishing! But finally the last one was off. Then suddenly he remembered the rail. It was breast high, and to get the frightened horse over it and into the water was impossible. He attacked it furiously with his crowbar. Fortunately he struck on the panel which was always removed when cargo was loaded, and in a dozen blows he cleared it away.

Shouldering and shoving, pushing and hauling, he got the horse out on the sloping deck. Trembling and snorting with terror, it slipped and pawed and scrambled on the smooth planking. Probably Ivanoff, with all his strength and cunning, his persuasion and even his threats, could not have got it safely in the water had not at that moment the hatch blown off the number

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two hold. It made a loud report, and Gunpowder plunged forward to escape the new danger. Ivanoff by a deft shove kept him going. The next instant the two were swimming in the quiet water, which had almost closed over the ship.

No one but an Ivanoff, a man too stupid to have any imagination, would have done such a thing.

"Why," would say your man who has enough intelligence to look ahead, "what is the use of saving a horse from drowning on the deck of a steamer, merely to have it (and oneself, too) swim aimlessly around in the empty sea and drown a little later anyhow? And at night, too! Ugh!"

But Ivanoff was too dull and primitive to think of all that. To him no one was dead as long as he lived—not even a horse.

DAWN, gray and forbidding, showed Ivanoff and the horse swimming about just as the imaginative one would have predicted—aimlessly. They were off the north coat of Maui, and the shore was only a mile away. But the horse, tired and confused, would not swim toward it. Instead, he continually circled about. And because he swam faster than Ivanoff, the man could not lead and show him the way, but had to trail along at his tail. There could be only one possible end—unless indeed the man turned loose and saved himself; and that did not seem to occur to Ivanoff.

Just as the distant mountain-tops began to glow with the first rays of the rising sun Ivanoff saw a speck come from behind a headland to the south of him. Gradually it drew nearer. It grew larger, and presently he heard the steady barking of a gasoline engine.

He stopped swimming, threw his arm in the air and shouted. The boat kept on its course without noticing him. As far as he could tell it would pass nearly half a mile to the seaward of him. Again he called. And again his voice was drowned in the noise of the motor, and the boat kept steadily on. For a minute or two he swam about easily, just keeping himself afloat and saving his strength until the boat should be at the nearest point to him. Then he gave a single wild yell and shot himself as far out of the water as he could.

The coughing of the engine stopped, and he saw a man stand up in the bow of the boat and look around. Ivanoff waved again. The engine started once more, and the boat headed for him. As it came close he saw it was a fishing-sampan with three Japanese aboard.

A hundred feet away they shut off their power and came drifting up to him. When they were within a dozen feet the man watching from the bow seemed suddenly to stiffen. His slant eyes contracted to mere slits; the surly expression on his face became vicious and evil. He called in his own language to the man in the stern. The other, obeying the evident order, passed up a long, heavy oar. Ivanoff, thinking it was to be held out for him to seize, made ready to catch the end of it. But Yamamoto raised it high in the air and brought it down with a vicious swing that was aimed at Ivanoff's head.

It was the unwieldiness of the weapon which gave the swimmer time to escape the blow by diving. He came up a few feet farther away from the boat and swam back to the horse, which was still beating around in futile circles.

"Go astern!" called Yamamoto to the man at the wheel. "And then swing over to port. I'll get him next time."

The engine started again. The reverse gear was thrown in, and the sampan slowly gathered sternway. Then it swung over to where it was once more within a few feet of Ivanoff. Yamamoto poised his sweep for another blow, while Ivanoff, unable to get out of range, watched it warily and made ready to dive again. Just as Yamamoto was about to strike, one of the men in the waist of the boat called out and then came scrambling forward.

"Look!" he said, pointing shoreward. "From those houses on the hillside we can be seen quite easily with a pair of good glasses. And there are always people with nothing better to do than to watch the boats that go by."

Yamamoto apparently was not in too much of a heat to be amenable to reason. He appeared to consider the matter. He looked at the distant houses—two little white blotches on the green slope. Then he spat into the sea with an expression of disgust.

"Yes," he replied. "You are right. It's better not to do it now. There will always be another chance. Pull him aboard then, Moji."

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The sweep changed hands and now was proffered to Ivanoff in friendship. Cautiously he suffered himself to be hauled aboard, holding the end of Gunpowder's halter looped around one wrist.

"All right. Can do," Yamamoto announced. "You go Honolulu. We take you."

Ivanoff's reasoning powers may have been limited, but in little affairs of life and death, the survival of the fittest, and such, his natural instinct was quite sound and not blunted by over much enervating civilization. And this instinct told him that it was highly unwise to make a voyage in a small boat with a man who had just tried to brain him.

He had seen the pantomime of pointing at the shore and made a shrewd guess at Yamamoto's reason for desisting. Once they were out of sight of land it was entirely reasonable to suppose that the Jap would revert to his original plan. Moreover, Ivanoff had no desire to abandon Gunpowder. So he said calmly:

"I think Honolulu no can do. Go this side." He pointed to the shore. "And make go plenty slow, so horse he can come."

Yamamoto laughed.

"We go Honolulu," he answered. "And horse no can come. You let him go."

When it comes to such a seemingly unreconcilable difference of opinion the man who has the simplicity of soul and directness of action which existed, say, about the time of the First Crusade—on the Saracen side—has a certain advantage over one whose medievalism is overlaid with even a few decades of copy-book Western civilization.

Ivanoff leaned over, apparently to examine a stubbed toe. When he arose there was a sharp-pointed, broad-bladed fish-knife in his hand. With such quiet deliberation that the Jap never noticed his danger until it was too late to get out of the way, Ivanoff held the knife, poised and ready, a few inches in front of the other's stomach; close enough so it would be useless to dodge and just far enough away to let the blow gather sufficient force before it struck.

The experienced Yamamoto promptly recognized the advantage of the exact position maintained by Ivanoff. From it one could very neatly deliver a stroke which at the same time plunges in and slashes upward; a blow which need not be followed by a second, and which permits no reprisal.

"I think more better go this side," remarked Ivanoff, jerking his head toward the shore.

"Can do," replied Yamamoto.

Very slowly, so that the horse could be trailed along behind, the sampan made for the shore, Ivanoff still preserving his strategic position. When they came close in he dived overboard, without the formality of words of farewell or thanks. In another minute man and horse had struggled through the light surf and were safe on the beach. And standing there, Ivanoff, I must regretfully state, made a gesture at Yamamoto which through all ages and among all races has signified profound contempt. You must not imagine that he was any paragon of chivalry.

The first thing Ivanoff did was to take from inside his shirt the precious dispatch he bore. It was watersoaked and sodden, in spite of the oiled-paper wrapping he had put around it, so he carefully put it in the sun to dry. Then he gave the horse a vigorous rub-down with grass and leaves. Next he cut it an armful of green, succulent cane-tops. While it was eating these Ivanoff went scouting to see where he was.

He had never seen a map of the islands, nor would it have meant anything to him if he had; but fifty generations of nomad ancestors had given him a sense of distance and direction which was better than all the maps in the world. He knew intuitively, without in the least being able to tell why, that he was not on the same island as Honolulu.

Before long he came to a well traveled road running parallel to the coast. Roads he knew led to settlements, and at coast-settlements one found boats. But which way should he go? He found a place where two broad-tired carts had turned out to pass each other. Now carts went down to the coast-villages loaded with sugar or other freight for shipment. They usually came back empty, or at least lightly laden. Also they always turned out to the right. He had his direction.

IT WAS nearly noon, and the wharf-superintendent was closing down his desk to go to lunch, when he became aware of the presence of some one who had walked into his office unannounced. He looked up and saw a curious-looking, yellow-skinned young man. He was ragged,

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unkempt, barefooted, at first glance a typical worthless loafer. But a closer inspection revealed a singularly intent and business-like look in his face.

"The horse, he want oats," said Ivanoff with the dignity of the Oriental, which is the same in rags as in velvet.

"Indeed, you interest me," replied the superintendent, who rather fancied his own gift of sarcasm. "But do you suppose I'm running an equine free-lunch counter?"

"I don't understand," answered Ivanoff. "The horse want oats."

"What horse are you referring to, may I ask?" said the superintendent with the heavy joviality of one who is in a position to reprove the other for impertinence if he answers in kind.

Ivanoff pointed out the window. Tied to a post in the yard the superintendent saw a beautiful, jet-black thoroughbred. From its alert, pricked-forward ears to its trim, well kept hoofs every line of its graceful body told the story of a perfect product of perfect breeding and handling. And its quick, restless movements and the way it pawed playfully at the ground told how lightly it looked on an hour's swim followed by a fifteen-mile ride.

The superintendent turned back to Ivanoff with a different manner. A man who was in charge of such a horse was at least worth listening to. "Where do you come from?" he asked.

"Mr. MacIntyre," answered Ivanoff, ignoring mere details of geography for what was much more important.

It was a happy answer, for the name of MacIntyre carried much more weight with the superintendent than the mention of any town or village.

"Oh!" he said. "And how did you get here?"

Ivanoff explained.

"I go Honolulu. Ship go down. I swim. Reach shore. Ride here."

The superintendent's eyes opened wide.

"What's that you say? The ship went down?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Ivanoff. "And the horse, he want oats."

"What ship and where?" demanded the superintendent.

"The *Waialua*," answered Ivanoff, and waved his hand to indicate the direction.

The superintendent grabbed his telephone. He called up a plantation on the north coast and asked if they had heard any news of the *Waialua* sinking anywhere near there.

"It's very probable," replied the voice at the other end. "Some one here saw three boats about daybreak this morning. Said they looked like ship's boats. They were coming in from the west. Then they pulled on around the end of the island. The *Moana Loa* was coming up the other side. She picked 'em up and went along on her way to Honolulu. They didn't send any word ashore."

There were a few more words of explanation and speculation, and the superintendent hung up.

"The horse, Gunpowder, he want oats," said Ivanoff.

"Good Lord!" burst out the superintendent. "That —— horse and his oats worries you more than the whole shipwreck."

"Yes," assented Ivanoff.

Five minutes later Gunpowder was contentedly munching a generous feed of oats spread out on a sack at his feet.

Then Ivanoff proceeded to the business next in hand. His was not a nature to deal with more than one situation at a time. He pointed to a ten-thousand-ton steamer which lay moored to the wharf taking on the last sacks of her cargo of sugar.

"I speak to Captain," he said.

"Certainly. Of course," replied the superintendent. "I suppose you want his cargo to give your horse for breakfast."

"No," said Ivanoff, and started to walk out the wharf.

The superintendent followed and caught up to him.

"I'll take you to the Captain," he told him.

They went up the gangway, across the littered deck and into the little saloon.

"Captain," said the superintendent when that official emerged from his room, "here's a man who I suspect wants to buy your ship."

Ivanoff ignored the facetious introduction.

"I go Honolulu," he stated in a perfectly matter-of-fact way. "You take me."

"What!" the Captain shouted at him. "Oh, yes, of course! I'm sailing direct for San Francisco, but I'll go out of my way to take any ragamuffin anywhere he wants to. Yes, certainly!"

Ivanoff was not impressed by the

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outburst. Really he did not understand the half of it.

"But I go Honolulu," Ivanoff persisted patiently.

"Why, may I ask?" the Captain said, more amused than anything else.

Ivanoff dug inside his shirt and produced a long, important-looking envelope with a big red seal.

"I take this Mr. MacIntyre," he said. "Head *luna*, he say sure give it to Mr. MacIntyre quick."

"Let's see," put in the superintendent quickly.

But Ivanoff held fast to the envelope, and only on repeated assurances of its immediate return did he reluctantly surrender it.

Both men examined it. Clearly from its appearance, as well as from the fact that it was being sent by a special messenger instead of by mail, it must be a document of importance.

"You're new in the island trade, Captain," said the superintendent. "But I suppose you know who this Mr. MacIntyre is."

"In a way, yes," was the reply.

"Well," explained the superintendent, "he's one of the big nabobs of these parts, all right. Owns nearly half of one island and some big slices of some of the others. There's a good many thousand tons of his sugar shipped every year, not to mention a few cargoes of pineapples and an occasional hundred head or so of cattle from one island to another.

"For all I know he may own half the stock of the shipping company that pays your salary. It might not be much of a mistake to burn a few extra tons of coal to oblige him.

"This man here—I forgot to tell you—was on an inter-island steamer that went down last night. It seems he was not taken off in the boats with the rest of the passengers. And I expect he really ought to get up there in a hurry."

"Nothing else going up?" asked the Captain.

"Not until next week."

The skipper thought for a while. Then he turned to Ivanoff.

"All right," he said. "I'll take you. We sail in two hours."

"And the horse, Gunpowder, he go too," said Ivanoff, announcing rather than requesting.

DONALD MACINTYRE, Beatrice Fairchild, and her aunt, Miss Shaw, were eating their breakfast in the bright, airy dining-room on the top floor of Young's Hotel in Honolulu. But though it was a morning of rare beauty, though the papaias were excellent, the coffee inimitable and the eggs of the freshest; though the white-clad Chinese waiter gave his best and most deferential service, it was a dismal meal. Late the night before the *Mauna Loa* had come in with the news of the sinking of the *Waialua*. And she had brought all the crew and passengers except Ivanoff.

How he had come to be left on the sinking ship no one could explain; but there was no doubt of the fact, however it had come about, for when Yamamoto arrived in the fishing-sampan, about the same time as the *Mauna Loa*, he had made no report of his meeting with Ivanoff.

Yamamoto did, however, take some pains to find out if Ivanoff had by any chance got in on the *Mauna Loa*. He was rather disappointed to find Ivanoff had not, for although the little Jap had a great deal of patience, he felt that farewell gesture from the beach made it imperative that he delay as little as possible in settling the score. Still, he reflected, Ivanoff was sure to arrive before long.

MacIntyre, in his grief, illogically blamed himself for having sent for Ivanoff. It had happened in this way. Three weeks before he had come over to Honolulu with the polo-team of the Island of Hawaii, of which he was captain. They had come for the annual inter-island tournament, and MacIntyre in particular had made up his mind that they should and would win the championship.

For this determination he had an excellent reason. It was nothing less than an intimation from the maddeningly elusive Beatrice that she might fix the date for their wedding as soon as he could give her the polo-cup for a wedding-present. He did not believe that a failure to win it would exactly result in everything being off, but still its possession would give him a great strategic advantage—it would make a good "talking-point," as it were.

His team had won its first two games, but so had the Oahu team. The cup, therefore, depended on the issue of the final game between them.

Then one morning at practise Jim

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Siddons, who after MacIntyre himself was the best man on the Hawaii team, broke his collar-bone. There was no first-rate substitute for him, so Oahu had, with first-rate sportsmanship, told MacIntyre he might play one of his ranch-hands if there happened to be any who knew the game. MacIntyre had of course sent for Ivanoff. And now for the sake of winning a polo-game he had got the poor fellow drowned.

The three ate disconsolately, exchanging commonplaces from time to time as the silence grew oppressive.

"THAT'S a big ship coming in," remarked Beatrice, looking out over the housetops to where bright blue water sparkled in the sun.

MacIntyre followed her gaze and saw a big, broad-waisted, bluff-bowed steamer slowly coming into the harbor.

"The *Dunstan*," he said. He flicked the newspaper which lay beside his place. "That shows how much faith you can put in these local papers," he went on. "The shipping news here gives her as sailing direct from Maui to Frisco."

Half an hour later, just as they were finishing, the head waiter came to MacIntyre.

"There is a steamship captain here to see you, sir," he said. "He says it's very urgent."

Thinking it might be the Captain of the *Waialua*, with perhaps some report of Ivanoff, MacIntyre promptly told the man to send him in. It was the Captain of the *Dunstan* who came to the table—a plain, bluff sailor, very much embarrassed at breaking in on the family party.

"I have just come up from Maui, sir, with the *Dunstan*," he said. "I was going straight to Frisco, but a man turned up down there with some very important dispatches for you; and as he had no other way of coming I brought him up. They seemed very urgent, sir."

"What sort of a man, Captain?" MacIntyre asked quickly.

"A sort of a Russian, I should say, sir."

Beatrice jumped in her seat and upset a water-glass. No one noticed it.

"Where is he?" said MacIntyre.

"Just outside, sir," answered the Captain. "He has the dispatches. He wouldn't give them to me to bring to you."

They all looked toward the door. There stood Ivanoff—dirty, disheveled, unshaven, barefooted, but with an expression of great contentment on his face. MacIntyre beckoned to him and he came in, threading his way through the tables and past the staring people with perfect self-possession. Why should he feel awkward or out of place? It was his master who was sitting there and who had told him to come in. In his hand he held the big red-sealed envelope.

"Glad to see you Ivanoff," said MacIntyre simply.

Ivanoff's face beamed, and he thrust the letter into his master's hand. MacIntyre opened it and took out the single sheet of paper. This is what he read:

DEAR MR. MACINTYRE:

Everything going on all right, except those last Plymouth Rocks you sent over aren't worth a hang. The whole two dozen only laid eight eggs in a week.

Respectfully,
A. F. KNIGHT.

He read it through a second time while he steadied himself. Then he looked up gravely.

"Thank you very much for bringing this to me, Captain," he said. "It is indeed of supreme importance. I won't forget this favor, I assure you."

"Ivanoff," he said when the Captain had left, "I want you to play polo tomorrow. Can do?"

"Yes, master," replied the man, his eyes snapping with delight.

"Of course," went on MacIntyre, "I had meant you to ride Gunpowder; but still there will be other horses that are pretty good."

"Gunpowder, he here, master," answered Ivanoff.

The next *Ivanoff* story will appear in the November issue

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"THAT'S BUSINESS!"

By John Amid

THE Middleton well was about two hundred feet deep when the news broke. Up to that time the widow had been hoping against hope. But Wylie Hudson, surveyor and water-witch, the man who knew more about the water of the San Gabriel Valley, both on and below the surface, than any other living being, shook his loyal head when she asked to know the worst.

"Mrs. Middleton, it seems awfully mean to say it now, but it would be meaner not to say it. I don't believe your well is any good at all. It may pay to go on deeper on the chance. We may strike good water-gravel anywhere; but as I told you before, it looks to me as though we were drilling in a dry hole."

"So close to the other well?"

The surveyor nodded assent.

"I've been talking with Steinman since the deal was sprung. They struck water at one hundred feet, but pretended it was only seepage. Since then they've been running through fine streaks of water-gravel—more than one hundred feet of it altogether, more than seventy-five feet before they got as deep as we are now. They're working in an entirely different formation. It looks to me like a repetition of the old story over again—Hagaboom strikes it right there, and we're not going to strike it right here. I'm sorry, Mrs. Middleton——" He stopped, realizing the inadequacy of words.

The widow brushed her hand across her forehead, pushing back her thin, iron-gray hair. "A strike means college for the girls," she had told the water-expert once, in one of her infrequent bursts of confidence, "but if we hit bed-rock——" A shrug had completed the sentence.

"I will have to sleep on it, Mr. Hudson," she said wearily. "It doesn't look very pleasant now, for a fact." Then her voice changed. "I certainly appreciate the way you have stuck by me in all this." Her thin lip trembled a little. "Perhaps I am not such a calloused business woman, after all."

She waved away his groping answer, and climbing into her disreputable gray car allowed him to crank the engine and watch her roar back the way she had come, skidding threateningly around the curves of the rough mesa road.

Opinions concerning the Widow Middleton differed widely. Victor Hagaboom, the fat little Pasadena capitalist who owned the quarter section that adjoined her land on the south, spoke of her usually as "Daredevil Middleton." Sometimes he varied slightly, calling her "Gambler Middleton," and occasionally he contemptuously alluded to her as "Fool Middleton."

On the other hand her Sikh, Natha Singh, talked differently. "Mis' Middleton," he would say, "she good woman, please. I work Mis' Middleton now pretty long time. Good woman. Pretty smart."

It was Hudson who had first told the

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widow that there was water under her land.

"It's this way," said he. "You are located directly between the mouth of the cañon and the big wells down there below in the middle of the valley. Now, all the water from those wells comes through the cañon."

"How do you know that? Just a guess?"

"More than a guess. Above the bed-rock those mountains have a shale formation that turns the water. All the water in that big watershed finds its way down the cañon, just as surely as if the stream were on top the ground. Once it gets out of the cañon, it percolates through the water gravel. Of course it's hard to say just where, but it gets to those wells; and to get there it has to go under your land. See?"

"Then a well on my land would be a good gamble?"

"Best in the world; but remember it's a gamble. There's always a chance that a well, even in the most favorable location, won't strike water. Clay, or some other formation, may have turned the water away from that particular spot. Why, I know of one place in this valley where there are three wells within a hundred feet of each other. One of them pumps just enough water to pay for itself—six or eight inches maybe; another one's dry—absolutely dry; and they pump fifty inches from the third without lowering the water-level. That well's worth forty thousand dollars."

The widow's eyes glistened and her mouth unconsciously formed the words, "forty thousand dollars." She was a newcomer in California, and the rocky slope of the mesa between the orange groves and the mountains seemed like an enchanted land where fortunes could be made in the twinkling of an eye, quite as the real-estate circulars affirmed.

VICTOR HAGABOOM, her neighbor, was no gambler.

"Water?" he commented when he was talking with the widow one day. "Sure there's water under here somewhere. What you have to do is to find it. That takes money. Well, I've got it."

"But suppose," asked the widow, "you put down a dry hole. What then?"

"Put down another."

"But suppose—" the widow's voice was a little anxious, for the savings of twenty-odd years as grammar-school principal, even after judicious investment, are no tremendous amount—"suppose you exhausted your resources? Suppose your money gives out?"

The capitalist snorted contemptuously.

"You'd give up before it was all gone. I'd sell the whole outfit to one of these fool Easterners. That's what I'll do in the end, anyway. I don't want any more California lemon groves, just to sit around waiting for a frost or a drought."

"Why!" It was an ejaculation of astonishment. "I thought there was nothing more profitable than a good grove! Surely Mr. Hagaboom, you've made a big profit with them yourself!"

The man of money snorted again, and toyed with the too heavy gold chain on a too prominent *embonpoint*.

"Sure. I made money off them same as I will here—same as I always do." He sneered cynically. "Best way to make money in California is to sell to some sucker from the East."

Hagaboom started his well first, and seeing the derrick raised and hearing the sand-pump thugging up and down, the Widow Middleton caught the fever and started her own well. Her land lay just north of Hagaboom's and higher on the gradual slope of the valley. The wells were near together. Half a mile west of them one well, already sunk, had proved a total loss.

"I know," said Wylie Hudson, when the widow asked him about it. "They never struck a drop of water there. They say they struck bed-rock. Nolan drilled that well, and he was telling me about it only the other day."

"Bed-rock?"

"That's what they say. But I don't see how it could have been myself. They only went down two hundred feet, and by my reckoning they ought not to have hit bed-rock above four or five hundred. I think maybe they hung up on a big boulder."

"But suppose it was bed-rock?" persisted the widow.

"Well," admitted Hudson, "that would make it bad. If it was bed-rock at two hundred feet there's mighty little chance of your striking water. You can't go through bed-rock. It's too expensive. Besides, there's no certainty of finding anything if you should drill into it. A couple of years ago a man over San Dimas way spent twenty thousand dollars trying to drill through

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bed-rock. He went into it a long way, but that's all the good it did him."

By the time the widow's well was two hundred feet deep Hagaboom's was nearly four hundred. "It's been awful hard going," the capitalist said, shaking his round head lugubriously. He had come over ostensibly to inspect the widow's prospects. "They're only making about two feet a day now. For two cents I'd pull my casing and start again in a new place."

Steinman, the two-hundred-pound foreman in charge of the rig drilling the Hagaboom well, went even further.

"It's bed-rock," he said. "If this was my well I wouldn't waste any more time on it. I'd pull that casing and start again somewhere else."

"What's the use of pulling the casing?" asked the Widow Middleton, who had gone over to look at her neighbor's gamble after hearing the alarming reports.

The foreman stared at her.

"What's the use of pulling the casing? My, but you *are* green, ain't you? Why, that casing is worth three dollars a foot. It's just as good as when it went in. We can use that on the new well."

When the widow told Hudson, he frowned.

"I don't understand it, Mrs. Middleton. If he's really struck bed-rock there's very little use of putting down another well. Hagaboom ought to know that—he's an old hand at this game. But perhaps they haven't struck bed-rock," he added hopefully; "likely they're just running through a tough streak and will find good water-gravel under it. The water must be here somewhere."

"I had an offer," began the widow doubtfully.

"Well?" asked the surveyor.

"It came from some Los Angeles parties, through one of the local agents. It's not quite what I put in, but it would let me out." Her voice broke a little. The water-expert scrubbed the side of his head vigorously, a sign that he was surely perplexed.

"I'm not going to advise you, Mrs. Middleton," he said finally. "If they've really struck bed-rock—and Steinman ought to know, for he's put in hundreds of wells in this valley—if they've really struck bed-rock, why, you're going to strike it too, that's all. But it may be only hard going. They may be in water-gravel tomorrow."

BUT they were not. The widow again went over herself to see the big foreman. He shook his head.

"It's bed-rock, all right. We're going to go on hammering a day or so because the boss says so, but you'll see us out of here inside a week."

That evening the widow accepted the Los Angeles offer. But she sold only three quarters of her land, determined to hold the remaining acres, with the well-site, and push her own shaft deeper on the forlorn hope. It meant what was, for her, a crippling loss.

Wylie Hudson nodded when he heard of the deal. "I'm afraid you are wise, Mrs. Middleton. I hated to say so before, for if you had struck water your land would have been worth double what you paid for it. But your well looks to me like an extremely dubious proposition. I've been awfully disappointed at the character of the stuff that sand-pump has lugged up."

The widow nodded her head jerkily, blinking her eyes a little. Then she climbed into her noisy car and drove off over the mesa at the furious clip that had earned her the nickname of "Daredevil Middleton."

The next day the news broke. Hudson was on the ground to tell Mrs. Middleton when she arrived in the pounding machine.

"Hagaboom's got water," was all he said.

The widow gripped the wheel hard and her eyes narrowed. "Was it he that bought my land?" she asked very softly.

Hudson nodded.

"So!" said the widow, drawing in her breath. "So! He played me for one of those Eastern suckers he talks about, did he?"

"Looks that way," said the surveyor bruskly.

"I want to think a minute," said the widow. "He knew all along that they had struck water?" The surveyor nodded again.

"He paid Steinman first to keep his mouth shut, then to let out that talk about bed-rock. Soon as they struck good going they began to talk bed-rock. You're not the only one, Mrs. Middleton—not by a long shot. He got four hundred acres down below on the same cry. Took it over for a song. It would have been worthless without water. He stands to make a mint of money." There was a bitterness that cut like acid in the surveyor's tones. "Says he's going to put in two more wells right away. There he comes now."

Hudson turned and walked away as

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Hagaboom approached, apparently not daring to trust himself within arm's length of an opportunity for throttling the puffy little man. But Hagaboom was all effusiveness.

"Well! We've had good luck, haven't we, Mrs. Middleton?" he ejaculated as he came up. "You've heard the news, I suppose?"

"Yes," said the widow dryly, "I've heard. You needn't bother to congratulate me."

"Oh, well!" Hagaboom wriggled uncomfortably. "Of course, if you're going to feel that way about it——" He broke off again, then shook his head impatiently. "You butted into a man's game, Mrs. Middleton," he continued; "butted in just like the rest of them, with the usual result. Now, I'm a business man. I'm willing to do the square thing. Business is business, but I've got a good deal of sentiment about me, too. I'll take your other forty acres off your hands at an even two hundred an acre. That'll go a long way toward letting you out where you got in. That's more than I'd do with a man," he added.

"Well?" he demanded after a pause. "Are you going to take it or leave it?"

"Mr. Hagaboom," said the widow with a courteous intonation, "allow me to thank you for your gracious offer to take what's left of the land at what it's worth. But let me assure you that even though I were pretty hungry and didn't have a cent except in those few acres, and there were no other purchaser in sight in the whole wide world, why—" she smiled pleasantly—"I'd just tell you to run along and mind your own business. Yes, just that—business."

To Wylie Hudson, half an hour later, she showed a different face.

"We've *got* to strike water now," she said. "That's all there is to it. *Got* to!"

The lines around her mouth and around the corner of her eyes seemed deeper than ever before. The Widow Middleton was getting along in years, the surveyor thought to himself; she would be an old woman soon.

"You see," she was explaining, "if we *should* strike water, it would be more than just what the well would be worth. That is, if I played the cards right."

Hudson lifted his eyebrows questioningly.

"This way," said the widow. "My well is almost directly up the slope from the Hagaboom wells, isn't it?"

The surveyor nodded.

"And if I put my well down deeper than his and put in a bigger pump, since they are so close together, couldn't I interfere with his flow of water?" The surveyor nodded his comprehension dully.

"Then, you see," continued the widow, "I could command not only what the water would be worth, but I could make Hagaboom pay me a nice premium by threatening to put in other wells and spoil his if he didn't take me over at my own figure."

Hudson shook his head sadly.

"No use, I'm afraid, Mrs. Middleton. It's the luck of the army. We're down two hundred feet now, and it looks bad. I believe it would be better to pull the casing and try a new place. I'm sorry."

"Not yet, Mr. Hudson." The widow was turning her face away from him, winking hard at the far horizon in a desperate effort to keep back the tears. One of her fixed ideas was that an old woman's crying was an abomination. "We won't give up yet. You may be wrong." But the water-man again sadly shook his head.

The next day Mrs. Middleton, outwardly at least, had entirely regained her composure

"We'll keep right on going down," she told Hudson firmly, "until the last cent's gone." Then she went over to where Macradie, her own foreman, was standing by the chuck-wagon.

SO THE Middleton well-rigging pounded away, with the big steel sand-pump lifting and thugging up and down in the earth where none could tell what it found but the man who separated the gravel. Macradie turned aside all inquires concerning the going.

"You can't tell anything about a well until it's dug," was his stock phrase. "You may think you got a good hole, and then you can't pump more than a couple of inches; and you may strike a big well on small gravel. Any man that prophesies about a well before she's tested——" Then he would hunch his shoulders and start to roll one of his inevitable cigarettes.

"But aren't you running through any water-gravel at all?" Steinman, who had orders from Hagaboom, would persist.

"The going's hard, for a fact," Macradie would retort. "This is awful rocky country. Some people certainly do have tough luck. That's all *I've* got to say."

One thing, however, was noted. On a big board attached to the derrick a record had

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been kept, marked up with a blunt carpenter's pencil, of the various strata encountered as the sand-pump had eaten its way into the ground. Thus the first fifteen feet was chalked up clear loam. The next ten feet showed rocks and boulders; then came twenty feet of red gravel, and so on down to two hundred feet.

Below that only one entry had been made, and this had later been erased. But Steinman, strolling over apparently by accident on a Sunday, when the widow's crew was away, had studied the indentations made by the pencil in the soft wood.

"Just what I thought!" he told himself, nodding sagely. "They wrote water-gravel in there, and then rubbed it out again." He reported the matter on Monday to Hagaboom.

A couple of weeks later an order came to one of the Pomona real-estate firms to secure an option on the quarter section that lay west of the widow's original holding, just beyond the acres that had been transferred to Hagaboom. The firm to whom the order had been given was able to do nothing, that particular piece of land being held by parties in the East whose whereabouts could not be ascertained; but the order was reported to Hagaboom, who had, it seemed, as many ears as there were sides to his versatile character.

"Humph!" grunted Hagaboom when he heard. "Getting ready to spring it, are they? Oh, my eye! Ain't they smart!"

To make more sure he quietly issued instructions that the firm should ascertain who was standing behind the ostensible agent giving the order. He was not surprised to learn that though the information could not be vouched for, Wylie Hudson was supposed to be interested in the deal.

"Well," sighed the capitalist, "some people do have all the luck. I was in hopes the old girl would give up and pull out, but she stayed with it and got the water all right —all right." He waxed indignant. "Shucks! Trying to fool an old-timer like me into believing there was nothing doing there, then swipe some land right away from under my nose! As if she could get away with that in my own country, too! Just copying my own game, by Golly!"

He watched that afternoon until the widow's rattling gray machine raced across the mesa, then strolled over to the well.

"Look here, Mrs. Middleton," he began, "we're going to be neighbors. We might as well thrash this matter out. You got some water. So now you're trying to grab land away from me. That won't do, let me tell you. I'm no Spring chicken. Why, my agents are closing an offer right now for that place you tried to grab off me!"

As he glanced into her narrowed eyes, the capitalist had an uneasy intuition that the widow knew he was lying, but he stuck to his game.

"I'm king of this country, as you might say. There isn't a real-estate man around here anywhere that isn't afraid of getting in bad with me." (That, at any rate, was no lie.) "Now, can't we come to some understanding on this thing?"

The widow's eyes widened.

"But Mr. Hagaboom, what need is there for any further understanding? You have your property, and I have mine; you have your ways of doing business—" the least possible hint of acidity in her voice added a comment on what she thought of those ways —"and I have mine. What is there to come to any understanding about?"

"Oh, you're awful innocent, you are!" jeered the capitalist. "Why," he went on sneeringly, "if you've got such a bum well as you make out, I suppose you would just jump at an offer to sell out, wouldn't you?"

"I don't know about that," said the widow coolly; "I was thinking of pulling the casing and starting in in another place. Macradie tells me there's not much use going deeper here."

"Oh, yes! I see!" commented Hagaboom, showing the open contempt he felt for this ineffective attempt at deceit. He had regained all his usual assurance. "Your well isn't worth a cent! I know that very well! And of course you are entirely ignorant of the fact that by digging deep enough you may be able to make a little trouble for me!" He showed his teeth with his sarcasm.

This was giving ammunition to the enemy with a vengeance, but the situation called for extreme measures.

"WELL—what's your offer?" asked the widow. "If that's what you're trying to get to." She made no attempt to hide her repulsion.

"That's business!" approved Hagaboom, visibly relieved. "Now look here." He put on his most conciliating manner. "Mrs. Middleton, you're a little frog in a big

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puddle. You're new to this game out here. You've had one taste of what it's like. I'm an old campaigner at it. Everything is on my side; nothing is on yours. If you buck me, why, I'll just wipe you off of the face of the map—that's all.

"Suppose you have got water; suppose you do try to make trouble for me by putting in other wells; I can fight you all the way down the line. I can put in three wells to your one. I can even keep people from buying what water you've already developed. You go busted and have to throw the whole thing away for a song. Now, what's the figure?"

"If you want to fight," said the widow, indifferently turning away, "I'll fight."

"Oh, no! No! No!" protested the capitalist. "Now don't fluff all up just as we were coming to an understanding. I was just about to make you an offer for your holding, if you wanted to sell out; and I was explaining why it would be an awfully good thing for you if you did want to sell out. Now see here," he hurried on as the widow seemed about to take further offense, "I'll be liberal. I'll give you twenty-five thousand dollars for your well and land. That's calling the well fifty inches, and there's not a chance in a hundred that it'll ever pump that." He stuck his hands into his pockets. "What do you say?"

His tone insinuated, "Take it or fight."

The widow appeared slightly bored. Although under her tight, man's coat her heart was exultantly thumping like any trip-hammer, outwardly she seemed annoyed at an unwelcome suggestion to end a welcome war.

"Well!" prompted the financier. "Speak up! Will you take it?"

The Widow Middleton took a deep breath, then lifted her chin haughtily.

"Of course not!" she said.

"Thirty thousand." The widow shook her head.

"Thirty-five, and not a cent more." Inwardly the capitalist was raging, trying to estimate how much water the widow's well really had. Evidently it was even better than Steinman had guessed.

Again the widow shook her head and turned away. "Then I guess that's all there is to say," she remarked.

Hagaboom made a final sally. "What's your figure?" he asked angrily.

Mrs. Middleton turned back and looked at him contemptuously. Beneath her calm exterior she was rapidly reviewing Hagaboom's offers, wondering how much he would actually consider paying. The thirty-five thousand he had already offered was higher than her wildest anticipations. Evidently the man was really afraid of what she might do.

On the other hand, she had already played her trump card. If he refused to buy, she would be at his mercy. Wouldn't it be better to reconsider and take thirty-five while she could get it? That would be enough to turn her loss into a big winning.

"Well?" suggested Hagaboom.

"Sixty thousand," said the widow coldly.

The capitalist gasped.

"That's outrageous! I won't pay it!"

"Nobody asked you to," remarked the widow. She looked at the surveyor, who had been a silent, amazed spectator. "If Mr. Hagaboom has finished what he has to say we'd better be going, Mr. Hudson."

Hagaboom stamped his foot.

"Mrs. Middleton! That's robbery! You've no right to ask anything like that amount! Make a fair offer and I'll listen to it. Be unreasonable and I'll fight you off the earth!"

"Sixty thousand, I said, Mr. Hagaboom."

For nearly a minute the capitalist glowered at her; then he wilted. She was too confoundedly assured. Evidently she was prepared for a finish fight.

"All right," he said at last, meekly enough.

The widow bowed a silent acknowledgment, then turned and walked toward her machine with shaking knees. Not until the papers that completed the transaction were in escrow did she allow herself the luxury of a smile. But when she had deposited Hagaboom's certified check for sixty thousand dollars she laughed aloud.

"I'd like to watch him," she confided to Wylie Hudson, "when he finds out that I told only the truth about that miserable well, and that it's really as dry as the bones of an Egyptian mummy!"

"'That's business'!" quoted Wylie Hudson, with a twinkle.

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Nothing Doing

By Walter Galt

LEW UPTON threw his leg wearily over the mule's shoulder and slid to the ground with a grunt. He unhitched the saddle before turning toward the camp-fire.

"Thar!" he remarked. "I guess that'll do; the critter's too played out to stray."

"Hullo, Lew!" said a voice from beside the camp-fire.

"Who's that? Oh, hullo, Jake, ye old hoss-thief! You alive still?"

"How's things, Lew? Where you from?"

"Blue Dog."

"Any news?"

"Naw. No news."

"Weren't old man Si Smith up to Blue Dog?"

"Yep. He were."

"Ain't he there yit?"

"Naw. Leastwise, not so's you'd notice."

"What's he been doin'? Never struck color, did he?"

"Naw. He struck Mike's gin-mill an' tried to tote a two-man load o' snake-pizen. Couldn't do it."

"How? What happened?"

"Nothin' much. On'y some cow-punchers from the Tumblin' Y outfit was in town, an' they 'lowed they could rope a steer better'n what he could."

"An' he beat 'em to it?"

"Naw. On'y they lent him a rope. Seems he was some sorter use wi' a rope onct. He went careerin' up the street fast as his pony could lick, lookin' fer somethin' to begin on, an' screamin' to beat a pack o' coyotes. Caught sight o' Mrs. Dickinson—you know her—Tim Dickinson's wife, him that useter boss the T bar T. Reckoned he'd get his hand in by practisin' on her. Roped her 'round the laig, an' dragged her best part o' half a mile. She got some hide scraped off."

"The boys didn't stand for that, did they?"

"Naw."

"What did they do?"

"Fixed up a lynchin'-bee—figgered they hadn't had such a number-one excuse since Pike Oliver shot that Easterner two years ago. They got busy."

"Shoot him up?"

"Some. Hung him laigs upwards to a tree, and filled him that durned full o' holes you'd ha' mistook him fer a fly-screen."

"So the durned old cuss is daid, is he?"

"Yep. He's sorter daid."

"When did that happen?"

"Day 'fore yesterday."

"Charlie Sims still up there—him wi' the long laigs an' two fingers missin'?"

"He's kinder daid too."

"Since when?"

"Day 'fore yesterday."

"I'll bet a month's pay he didn't get lynched—not Charlie."

"Naw. He got in the way of old man Si Smith, an' tried to stop him."

"Shot?"

"Through the haid."

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"How's Bud Johnson's outfit makin' out?"

"That crowd that staked over against the Goat Spur?"

"Yep."

"They've quit."

"Didn't it pan out?"

"Guess they didn't go down fur enough."

"Sell out?"

"Naw."

"Still holdin' on to the claim then?"

"Naw. I'm tellin' you they quit. Me an' another man jumped it; struck it pretty middlin' too, two feet lower down."

"What did they quit for?"

"Sheriff 'lowed they'd better."

"'Cause why?"

"'Cause they did too much talkin', I reckon."

"You're crazy! For talkin'?"

"Talkin' about what they did over to Gray Gulch. They got blowin' down at Mike's, Sat'day night, over a skinful o' tiger-juice."

"What had they been doin'?"

"I dinnaw. None o' my business. Some sorter hold-up, I reckon."

"Not that business where seven men were killed this side o' the Gulch?"

"Maybe. I dinnaw. 'Tweren't proved."

"I thought Jordan's gang were supposed to have done that?"

"Couldn't have."

"'Cause why?"

"There ain't any Jordan's gang no more."

"Since when?"

"Day afore that hold-up happened."

"Get took?"

"Naw."

"Clear out o' the district?"

"Tried to."

"What stopped 'em?"

"Forty-fives mostly; there was two or three Winchesters."

"Anybody hurt?"

"Nothin' to speak of. Pup Watson lost his left eye; oh, yes, an' Jimsey Bates had to have his laig amputated."

"Poor old Jimsey! I useter know him down to Miller's Creek; he was a good feller. Who did the amputation?"

"Matty Schuster."

"How did he set about doin' it?"

"With an ax. Jimsey hollered some."

"Lemme see—weren't Joe Sigsbee Sheriff up to Blue Dog?"

"He was."

"How d'ye mean—was? Ain't he there now?

"Sure. He ain't been in a condition to quit for quite a while."

"Did he chuck the job?"

"Naw."

"Get the gate?"

"Naw."

"What happened?"

"Wa-al, Ike Ohlson knifed two men in Mike's three weeks back. The Sheriff went out to get him."

"Pull it off?"

"Naw. Ike got him."

"Did the boys stand for that?"

"Naw. We're all for law and order up to Blue Dog these days; we don't allow no man to shoot up the Sheriff."

"Lynch him?"

"Naw. You couldn't call it a lynchin'. Chased him a mile or two across country, an' shot him on the run."

"Who's Sheriff now?"

"Bill Rimington."

"Hold a 'lection?"

"Naw. Bill's claim petered out, an' Bill was broke. The boys figgered he was the on'y white man in Blue Dog who'd got time to fill the job, an' they didn't care for to see him on his uppers either. But Bill weren't lookin' for no charity. So they fixed up a deppitation to Bill, an' 'lowed if he didn't take the job they'd run him out o' town for a doggone useless bum. Bill knew the boys was on'y jokin' about his bein' a bum; he kinder froze on. Job came nacheral to him, I reckon."

"Weren't there no opposition?"

"Not so's you'd ha' noticed it. There was some wanted to hold a reg'lar 'lection. They held a meetin' down to Mike's an' nominated a man name o' Luke Kelly; but we-all went down to Mike's in a bunch, an' cleaned out the meetin'. There weren't no kinder doubt about who was Sheriff when we'd finished."

"Any shootin'?"

"Naw. None to speak of. The meetin' was mostly drunk by the time we got there —couldn't aim straight."

Another man rode out of the darkness, slid off his pony beside the fire and said:

"Hullo, Lew! Down from Blue Dog?"

"Yep."

"Any news?"

"Naw. No news."

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RUNNING A CARGO

By Frederick William Wallace

THERE are several craft of the same name to be found in the Shipping Register, but there is really only one *Quickstep*, and she was quick and a stepper to boot. Tom Decker of Decker's Island built her; Tom Decker sailed her and fished in her, and a rough-and-tumble gang of Deckers, Westhavers and Morrisseys manned her. Fishermen characterized her as an able vessel with an able skipper and an able gang ever since her first trip haddocking, when she came in with a market-glutting fare.

Quickstep. Official No. 12,783. Schooner. Built 1898 Decker's Island, N. S. Length, 110 ft.; beam 24 ft.; depth 10 ft. 115 tons gross; 98 tons register. Thos. Decker, Managing Owner, Decker's Island, Anchorville Co., N. S.

So runs the entry in the Shipping List regarding her. A simple record only, but enough for Government purposes. Tom Decker, her skipper, would dilate a trifle more upon his vessel and be never weary of describing her qualities.

"Yes, sir! Me an' th' boys built that there vessel ourselves down on the Island. There's no scamped work in her, let me tell ye. Hardwood plankin' an' framin'—all picked an' seasoned timber; full o' hangin' knees an' galvanized-iron fastenin's o' best Swedish. Her two masts are best Oregon pine an' th' finest pair o' sticks on th' coast.

"She kin sail better'n any o' them, even though she ain't one o' them new-style round-bow knockabouts drawed out by yacht-designers. She's a toothpick, but her lines are a dream—yes, sir, a perfect dream! —an' she's a ghost for sailin'.

"Handle? Jest like a yacht. She'll come around on her heel 'thout lightin' up th' jib-sheets; an' for lyin' to, thar ain't nawthin' 'round th' Western Ocean that'll beat her for hangin' to a berth-under a fores'l.

"She'll hang to forty fathom water for a week while some o' them other jokers 'ull hev drifted a hundred mile. Yes, sir, she's a Decker's Island product an', like everything what comes off that there Island, she's as smart as they make 'em."

Speak to an Anchorville man about her.

"Th' *Quickstep*?" he will say. "Yes, she's a lively one, all right. She's owned an' sailed by them Decker's Island crowd—a proper gang o' ruddy pirates. We Anchorville fellers don't hev no truck with them—they'd steal th' brass-work off a coffin.

"Ye only need t' git ashore in their vicinity t' see how quick they kin loot an' strip a vessel. Why, they've got finer fittin's in their houses down on that Island than ye'll find in a fust-class hotel—sofys, cushions, saloon-doors, mahogany furniture, pianos an' sichlike what they've stole offn wrecks.

"Th' blame Gov'ment cutter spends most o' her time down there a-watchin' them when th' lobster-season's closed.

"Oh, they's a slick crowd all right," he will nod, "an' that *Quickstep* an' her gang is th' shadiest bunch on Bank water. Some o' these fine days they'll git caught at their tricks an' none o' us law-abidin' fishermen 'ull be sorry. They're a disgrace to th' country."

In his Official Orders, Captain Murray of the Government cutter *Ariel* had a standing entry:

Keep a strict supervision over the Decker's Island fishing-schooner *Quickstep*. Off. No. 12,783. Thomas Decker, master and part owner. Several reports have come to the Department regarding illegal acts on the part of this vessel and her crew. Overhaul and search her whenever possible.

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The cutter's commander knew the *Quickstep* well enough and had overhauled her times without number. He also knew what Tom Decker thought of him and the knowledge rankled in the officer's mind, but so far the *Quickstep* was officially clear of any infraction against the law. However, Captain Murray lived in hope.

THE *Quickstep* was scarce six months waterborne when she fished the last of her Magdalen Island baiting on St. Peter's Bank. With eighteen hundred quintals of prime salt fish stowed in her hold-pens, she was ready to swing off for Anchorville market. The gangs, fore and aft, had already seen the tallyboard and estimated the probable stock and share, and after cleaning up the decks and stowing the gear away for the passage, they awaited the skipper's orders to put the sail to her for a grand shoot for home.

But Decker appeared to be in no hurry to swing off. While the men were cleaning up, he paced the quarter saying nothing.

"How about it, skip?" inquired Tom Morrissey, who was at the wheel. "Will I shoot her on a west-b'-south course for home? This wind holdin' southerly 'ull give us a good lift for Anchorville."

The skipper glanced to windward and stopped in his steady pacing. "Call the gang!" said he to one of the men standing aft.

When the rugged crowd of husky, bewhiskered Islanders gathered on the quarter, he addressed them quietly.

"We got a good smart vessel here, boys, an' a crowd what'll hang together. Fishin's all right, but there's easy money t' be made in other things 'sides fishin'. What d'ye say if we shoot into French St. Peter's an' lay in a little stock o' rum for th' crowd to home? I bin thinkin' we c'd buy a couple o' hundred dollars' worth o' that French brandy an' make quite a tidy sum out o' it. Them Newf'n'landers run it over to their shore. Why shouldn't we?"

"Where'll we land it, skip?" inquired a man doubtfully.

"Where else but at home?" answered another.

"An' git cotched by old Murray in th' cutter? It's chancy, skip!"

Captain Decker sniffed disdainfully.

"Old Murray an' th' cutter couldn't catch a driftin' trawl-kag. I'll guarantee t' sail circles around his old tea-kittle in this packet. Don't worry about that brass-bound bridge-stanchion!

"Come on, now, here's a chanct o' makin' an extry dollar or two. Let's all chip in 'bout ten dollars apiece an' buy some rum. We'll run it inter Jimmy Petersen's place an' he'll buy it from us. We'll clear a hundred per cent. an' no risks but dodgin' th' cutter down home. It's dead easy."

WITHIN five minutes, the *Quickstep*, under topsails, stays'l and balloon, was heading N. N. W. for St. Pierre in the French colony of the Miquelon Islands.

These Islands, situated a few miles off the Newfoundland coast, are the headquarters of the French fishing-fleet; and when the St. Malo, Fecamp, St. Servan and Paimpol "bankers" come across from France they discharge a goodly "ballast" of French cordials and brandy at the Islands. All the Bank fishermen know this, and the thirsty ones are always glad of a chance to run into the French Islands for a cheap drunk.

An American quarter goes a long way in the Miquelons with brandy at five cents a glass—and a beer-glass at that.

"Now, boys," said Decker, when Galantry Head was raised. "We'll jest shoot inter the outer anchorage an' leggo the manila cable. Erne, Bill, Tom an' me'll take th' two dories an' go ashore for th' rum. You fellers better remain aboard.

" 'Tain't wise," he explained, "for a whole ship's company to git ashore in S'int Pierre with booze sellin' so cheap."

And as he maneuvered the *Quickstep* into the harbor among the numerous schooners, brigs, and brigantines at anchor, he tuined a deaf ear to the audible growls of the disappointed gang.

They let go the anchor abreast of the antiquated French gun-boat detailed by the Republic to protect the interests of their colony in North American waters, and the mainsail was hardly down before Decker had the dories over.

"Now, fellers, be good ontil we come off," he said with a grin. "Don't git sassin' them Frenchies aboard th' dreadnaught or they'll be after blowin' holes in th' *Quickstep*——"

"Aye, skip," growled big Bill Westhaver, who had been critically examining the vessels anchored around. "That's advice as would be good for you t' remember. There's that Gloucesterman we met in th' Ma'da-

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leens lyin' to loo'ard. Maybe her crowd ain't forgot th' way you stole their bait at Grindstone——"

"Eh? What?" exclaimed Decker, glancing around in evident concern. "Lord Harry, so it is!"

"An' I hev no doubt they'll be pleased t' meet ye," continued the other. "She'd a great bunch o' them wild Judiquers an' Cape Britoners aboard — fair devils for scrappin' they are. Look out they don't cotch ye. There ain't much chanct for a rescue with us away out here."

The skipper paused astride the rail.

"Um, yes; there ain't no doubt but ye're right, Bill. Well, Judiquers or no Judiquers, we come here on business, so let you 'n' Mike, Wally, Ross, Earle, an' John come ashore along o' me. It might be a good plan fur yez t' take some o' them iron belayin'-pins with ye. Shove them down yer boots. No need to go ashore twirlin' them an' askin' for trouble."

When the dories pulled up on the beach-wharf, Decker answered the scarlet-trousered *gendarme* who accosted him.

"Yes! *Oui!* Schoonaire *Quickstep. Canadien.* Just shot in for some provisions. Savvy? Goin' out again soon. No need to report. Stick this silver dollar in yer crimson jeans an' tell me ef Johnny Bosanquet's still doin' business at the old stand?"

"Aw, *oui! Merci, m'sieu!* M'sieu Bosanquet up de street, Capitan. 'Cabaret de Pecheur'. I keep eyes on your doree, Capitan. Lot of dronk Americaine ashore mak' mistake with doree——"

"Any o' th' *Frances Cameron's* crowd ashore?" inquired Decker nervously.

The *gendarme* nodded.

"*Oui! Françoise Cameerong!* Their doree over to the stone jettee. All up at Pierre Leroux'—'Auberge de Saint Malo'."

"Then we'll keep clear o' th' 'Auberge de S'int Malo'," muttered Decker as he strode up the wind-swept street.

At Bosanquet's the purchase was rapidly consummated and Decker made his men hustle the cases of spirits to the dories without wasting time.

"Let's git back to th' vessel now an' git to sea afore it comes dark," said he; but the perspiring fishermen demurred.

"Judas! but ye're in a hurry, skipper!" growled Westhaver. "There's a drink or two promised us up at Bosanquet's. D'ye think we're a-goin' t' bust our bloomin' hearts out luggin' them cussed cases 'thout somethin' t' cool us off? Be reasonable, skipper."

"An' leave th' dories with all that booze aboard? Not likely!"

"Well, tell that ruddy Johnny Darm to keep an eye on them. We won't be more'n ten minutes." Backed up by the others, Westhaver's appeal carried, and after cautioning the *gendarme* to watch the boats, the *Quickstep's* crew made up the street again for the promised thirst-quenchers.

II

IT WAS Cluny McPherson of the *Frances Cameron's* gang who started the trouble. Cluny was huge, raw-boned and stupid, but he had enough Highland Scotch blood in him to retain a vivid memory of any man who insulted him, for the McPherson strain was strong for revenge.

At the herring-traps at Grindstone Island, two months previous, McPherson had been insulted by Tom Decker and consequently the big fisherman had a photographic memory for the skipper's features.

Cluny happened to be in Bosanquet's when Decker and his gang entered for the promised drinks, and without wasting a minute he nipped across to the 'Auberge de Saint Malo' for reënforcements. Then the band began to play.

Full of French brandy and the spirit of retaliation, the *Frances Cameron's* crew swarmed into the 'Cabaret de Pecheur', and Tom Decker turned from the rough bar in time to receive the heft of Cluny's hairy fist on his jaw. Quick as a flash, Decker laid hold of a long-necked cordial-bottle and smashed it over the red-thatched McPherson skull and the latter went down for the count.

With oaths and growls of rage, the twenty husky fishermen congregated in the little room engaged in a battle wherein the Marquis of Queensberry rules had no part—sea-booted feet, belaying-pins and bottles being the principal articles of offense.

Then Bosanquet's assistant — a bull-necked Parisian tough, who had migrated to the Miquelons to avoid an unwelcome migration to Devil's Island—took a hand in the fracas and incidentally took a flying belaying pin on the temple. The missile, hurled by a brawny arm, smashed into his brain, and the man crashed to the floor like

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a pole-axed ox. The combatants knew the brawl had culminated in a tragedy.

"Beat it for th' vessel, boys!" roared Decker, making for the door. Two *gendarmes* with swords drawn barred the way, but the mob of men flying out of the door went over them like an avalanche and they rolled into the mud with a clatter of accouterments and French oaths.

Haunted by a common fear, the opposing factions forgot their differences in the desire to reach the beach, and piling pell-mell into their dories, each gang pulled for their respective vessels with strokes which would have defeated a college eight.

"Sock it to her, sons!" howled Decker, sweating at an oar. "To th' vessel afore we git arrested an' jugged for that shine! Give it to her! One! Two! One! Two! Pull, boys! Put yer backs into it!"

A bullet whinged past his ear.

"Th' beggars are firin' at us from th' shore. This is a hangin' scrape! Pull, sons, pull, ef ye ever want t' see Decker's Island again!" And they pulled as they had never done before.

Over the rail of the *Quickstep* they tumbled, and, pausing for a moment to make the dory-painters fast, all hands tallied on to the foresail-halyards.

"Up yer fores'l!" roared Decker, running for'ard with the cook's hatchet. "Loose yer jumbo an' h'ist away, some o' yez! Jumbo! Jumbo! Some o' yez! It don't take all hands t' h'ist that fores'l! Weather up yer tail-rope an' up with th' wheel! Judas! Th' ruddy gun-boat is gittin' her mud-hook!"

Ere the sail was fully hoisted, the vessel paid off and Decker slashed the straining manila cable with the ax. The rumble of the steam windlass on the French gun-boat inspired the *Quickstep's* crowd to Herculean exertions, and within five minutes from the time they had boarded the schooner the foresail and jumbo were set and the vessel paying off across the gun-boat's bows.

The *Frances Cameron* was also under way and standing out to sea with her fore-boom cocked high over the nested dories to a full sheet. Tearing along in her wake, a cable's length astern, came the *Quickstep* with all hands snatching the stops off the big mainsail.

Bang! The gun-boat was talking. Giving a hasty glance over the taffrail Decker saw that she was also under way and heading for the harbor-entrance to intercept them.

"Mains'l! mains'l!" yelled the Skipper. "Up with th' big rag or he'll catch us! Jumpin' Jupiter! I see us all swingin' with our necks in th' bight o' a rope if them Sabots git a-holt o' us. Heave away, bullies! Never mind th' crotch. I'll 'tend to that!"

And while the men panted and pulled on the halyards, the skipper tended crotch, sheet and wheel at one and the same time.

With six hundred and fifty square yards of extra canvas hoisted, the *Quickstep* began to storm along, with five dories romping and tumbling to their painters alongside. To windward flew the *Frances Cameron* under foresail and jumbo—her crowd were wrestling with the mainsail and getting ready for hoisting; and to windward of her and but a short distance astern was the gun-boat.

"We're agoin' t' be cotched!" panted Tom Morrissey apprehensively. "Th' cruiser's overhaulin' us——"

"Shut yer head, yuh big croaker!" snapped Decker. "We ain't caught yet."

Glancing at the course the gun-boat was making, Decker did some rapid thinking.

"We're sailin'-vessels," he muttered to himself. "He's a steamer. Ef I was him, I'd git to loo'ard o' th' *Frances Cameron* an' jam her an' me up to wind'ard. Will he? I wonder now! We'll hev t' haul by th' wind when that headland jams us off from runnin' any further. I jest wonder what he'll do? Um! I see his game now. He knows we gotter come by th' wind soon, so he's edgin' to wind'ard o' both of us. That'll mean he intends to jam us down on th' land.

"Um! Tom Decker, it sure looks as if your goose is cooked. Ye'll either hev t' surrender or run a chanct o' pilin' up on th' beach, an' it's jail either ways. What did that stupid swab o' a Frenchman want t' mix up in our little scraps for anyway? Oh, boys, stand by sheets fore 'n' aft!"

THE long Summer evening was darkening up for night when the three vessels came to the point of action. To windward lay the open sea and the French gun-boat. Inside of the steamship was the *Frances Cameron* under foresail, jumbo and a half-hoisted mainsail with the gaff jammed up against the lee main-rigging.

To leeward, and approaching the *Cameron's* quarter, stormed the *Quickstep*, running

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before the wind under her four whole lowers. Ahead of the latter and on her port hand were the rocks.

To clear the land, both schooners would have to sheet in and haul by the wind, and to block such an attempt the old Republican cutter was edging in as fast as her nine-knot engines would drive her. If they held on, the schooners would go ashore. If they hauled their wind, schooners and gun-boat would meet at a converging point.

The nervous watchers on the *Quickstep* could see the red tassels on the caps of the man-o'-war's men as they stood at their stations along the rail. They could also see the breakers on the shore; and the strain was intense.

"Sheet in! Lively, boys, lively!" roared Decker, whirling the spokes over.

Up to windward clawed the gallant vessel and she careened to the weight of the breeze in her sails. The other schooner also put her helm down, but not having her mainsail properly hoisted she lacked enough aftersail to hold her head to windward, and she lay right athwart the *Quickstep's* course.

"Thar's two schooners a-comin' in th' harbor, skipper!" hailed a man. And on the information Decker did some Napoleonic thinking.

"I gotter.git past that stupid plug ahead an' I gotter dodge that gun-boat. Mister Johnny Frenchman cain't turn very well, now them two other schooners hez showed up, an' ef th' *Cameron* keeps a-goin' like he is he'll foul th' steamer."

Aloud he shouted: "Stand by for an American shoot! You fellers aft here all shout with me to th' *Cameron's* skipper when we come to weather of him: 'Hard up! Hard up!' Remember that!"

The gun-boat had slowed down slightly to leeward of the *Cameron* and was engaged hoisting out a boat. Decker noted every phase of the situation.

"Now, boys, light up yer jib-sheets!"

The *Quickstep* shot up on the *Cameron's* quarter.

"Hold everything for'ard! Now, fellers, all together: Hard up! Hard up!"

The skipper of the *Frances Cameron* was rattled with the predicament he was in. He could see the gun-boat a hundred feet away and just on his lee bow; he saw the rocks to leeward of his beam and also the *Quickstep* on his weather-quarter but a good jump from him. His gang, hauling away at the mainsail halyards, were yelping anxious questions at him, and when the startling hail of "Hard up! Hard up!" reached his ears, he whirled the wheel over without thinking. The action caused his vessel to fall off before the wind, and before he could avert it, the schooner crashed into the gun-boat dead amidships!

"Jump for yer dories, boys, an' make for th' schooners a-comin' in," bawled Decker as the *Quickstep* surged past. "I'll tell 'em t' pick ye up an' stand out again."

It was needless advice, for the *Frances Cameron's* gang were even then piling into their dories and pulling out to sea. The schooner had driven her bowsprit clean through the iron plates of the gun-boat's hull and in the various davits and boat-booms of the war-vessel the *Cameron's* foremast and head-gear had become entangled so that both craft were locked together.

"Rammed by a wooden schooner!" ejaculated Tom Morrissey with a whoop of delight at the gun-boat's plight. "Waal, what d'ye know about that? S'pose she's so old an' her plates so thin with twenty year's chippin' that a knife 'ud go through 'em——"

"Hi-i! What's th' racket, cap?"

The first of the incoming schooners, a Gloucesterman, was on the *Quickstep's* beam and the skipper was hailing.

"Trouble ashore," roared Decker in reply. "Run in an' pick up them dories what's pullin' out an' shoot to sea again. 'Tis th' *Frances Cameron's* gang."

"I cotton, cap!" sang out the other, luffing. "Raisin' —— with th' Frenchies, I cal'late. All right, bully, jest watch me nip 'em up."

Decker, however, didn't wait to watch the Gloucesterman "nip 'em up." He knew that the *Cameron's* skipper would be out for his scalp as soon as he got aboard the rescuer.

"Give her th' stays'l, th' balloon an' th' tops'ls," he shouted anxiously. "When that Gloucesterman hears th' story he might be for givin' us a chase——"

Bang! Bang! Boom! The gun-boat was showing her teeth and the *Quickstep's* crowd ducked their heads instinctively.

"What are they doin'?" cried Decker. "Git my glasses, John. Is th' gun-boat clear yet? Hurry! It's gittin' dark."

John, with the glasses glued to his eyes, stared into the dusk astern. "Th' blame' gun-boat's clear . . . an' here comes that Gloucesterman hoofin' it like th' mill-tail

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o' Hades with Johnny Frenchman after him——"

"Is th' *Cameron's* gang picked up?"

"I sh'd imagine so. Three or four empty dories driftin' about. Th' *Cameron* is driftin' ashore——"

"All right! Git yer dories aboard an' stow that rum in th' kid ontil I git a chanct to think. Lord Harry! What a session—what a session! Jupiter! I'll hev t' see a lawyer 'bout this scrape ef we git clear. Wonder ef th' *Cameron's* owners kin lay a claim ag'in' me for that rammin' business? Judas! What a bluff . . . an' t' think that it worked! 'Hard up!' I says, an' he does it—th' silly swab!"

And Decker pawed the wheel and chuckled as the *Quickstep* hauled off the land and curtsied to the lift of open water.

III

THE breeze held until the *Quickstep* made the latitude of Sambro; then it dropped flat calm. "Drive her, you!" had been the watchword ever since the flashing lights of Galantry Head had sunk astern, and in the whole sail, storming along across St. Pierre Bank, the schooner had eluded her pursuers in the night.

It was a drive which few of the gang would ever forget. Lights doused; a strong breeze; all sail and the lee rail buried in creaming froth; it kept all hands on the alert and nervous with future anxieties.

"I wonder ef th' news of our racket at th' Miquelons has been tallygraft to home," muttered Decker for the twentieth time as he paced the quarter looking for an air.

"Why don't ye pull over to that little handliner an' see ef he's got 'ny noospapers?" growled big Westhaver. "He's only jest made th' berth an' ten chances t' one he has this mornin's Halifax papers. I'll pull ye over."

"Open one o' them cases an' gimme a couple bottles," said the Skipper. "We'll pull over an' see."

A mile's pull over the oily swell brought them alongside the handliner, and the trio smoking around her decks were the first to speak.

"Are youse fellers off th' *Quickstep?* Ye are? Holy trawler! But ye've been makin' things hum. Lord Harry! Th' whole coast is talkin' about ye. Le' see a holt o' yer painter!"

"Got 'ny noospapers about it?" growled Decker, none too pleased at the notoriety he was receiving.

"Here y'are, cap. This mornin's Halifax papers. How much rum hev ye got aboard?"

Decker looked up sharply.

"Oh, ye know that too, do ye? Sink me! But when a man buys a ruddy long-neck these days th' whole gory coast knows it. Here's a couple o' bottles. Maybe ye kin drink it an' keep yer mouths shut about meetin' us."

"Thanks, cap, we sure will," answered the handliners in chorus. "Trust us for that! We ain't no flamin' Scott Act spotters an' good S'int Pierre's a drink for a king. Come aboard an' give us th' yarn. Th' blame noospapers git things reported all wrong."

There was the suspicion of a breeze ruffling the water and Decker declined the invitation.

"No, thanks, fellers. Got t' be movin'. So long, an' keep quiet."

On the way back to the schooner, Decker hastily perused the papers and his stifled ejaculations had the rowers agog with curiosity. Aboard the *Quickstep*, now gliding along to the first of a breeze, the gang lined the quarter and besieged the skipper with a running fire of questions.

"Wait a second an' I'll read it to ye," snapped Decker. "They got th' whole bill an' a lot more, —— them!"

Seating himself on the house, with the crowd craning their necks over his shoulders, he commenced:

" 'Strange Affair from the Miquelons'—(will ye look at th' size o' th' print? Lord Harry! Ye'd think 'twas a ruddy war!) 'French Gun-Boat Rammed by Fishing Schooner. Decker up to His Tricks Again.' (What d'ye know about that? Decker must be a —— of a feller 'cordin' to them noospapers. Um!) 'Telegraphic reports from Saint Pierre state that the French Fishery Patrol cruiser *Rouget* was rammed by the American schooner *Frances Cameron* while the cruiser was endeavoring to hold the crew in connection with a shore-brawl. The cruiser sustained slight damage.

" 'The crew of the *Frances Cameron* abandoned their vessel after the mishap and escaped in their dories to a near-by schooner. The *Frances Cameron* was engaged in salt fishing under the command of Captain Wal-

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lace Doyle, and is owned by the Western Fish Co., of Gloucester, Mass.' (Um! that part's all right. We ain't shinin' in that, but here's th' funny part.)

" 'SYDNEY, N. S.' The American schooner *Geraldine* put into North Sydney last night and landed the crew of the Gloucester schooner *Frances Cameron*, abandoned at Saint Pierre after a collision with the French cruiser *Rouget*. Our correspondent interviewed Captain Wallace Doyle regarding the mishap and learned the following strange story:

" 'It appears that the Canadian fishing schooner *Quickstep*, commanded by Thomas Decker of Decker's Island, had run into Saint Pierre for the purpose of buying a quantity of spirits, presumably to import into Canada and evade the customs duties, and while ashore making the purchase, the crew of the *Quickstep* along with the crew of the *Frances Cameron*, got mixed up in a tavern brawl.

" 'During the *mêlée*, a resident of Saint Pierre was killed, and both crews, frightened at the outcome of the fight, made for their respective vessels and attempted to put to sea. The French Fishery Patrol cruiser *Rouget* followed the fleeing schooners and endeavored to stop them, and in crossing the *Frances Cameron's* bows was rammed by the fishing-vessel.

" 'Captain Doyle stated that it was his intention to heave to and surrender to the French authorities, but the *Quickstep* coming up on his weather quarter crowded him into the cruiser, causing a collision. Appalled at the mishap, the crew of the *Cameron* took to their dories and were picked up by the *Geraldine* and later landed here.

" 'Captain Doyle is emphatic in his assertion that the *Quickstep* was the cause of the accident, and he is also of the opinion that the crew of the latter vessel were responsible for the death of the man in the tavern ashore.' (Th' ruddy gall of him! What d'ye know about that? We're t' blame fur th' whole thing, by Jupiter!)

" 'Upon the information of the *Frances Cameron's* crew, the local Customs Department has advised the Protective Service to maintain a strict watch for the *Quickstep* in connection with the liquor-smuggling.' Now, fellers, here's whar' th' fun comes in. Listen. 'Captain Murray in the Government cutter *Ariel* left Anchorville this evening. The cutter is presumably on the lookout for the *Quickstep* with her contraband cargo.' "

The newspaper account caused the *Quickstep's* gang several emotions, but the latter item made them glance apprehensively around the horizon for the sight of steamer smoke. They were frightened — not the least doubt of it — and for five minutes Decker was bombarded with questions.

"Heave that cussed rum over th' side," cried the gang. "It'll save more trouble. Lord Harry! It's jail for th' crowd of us over that S'int Pierre racket. Ef we hadn't ha' listened to you an' yer cussed schemes, we'd ha' been home now 'stead o' bein' chased by cruisers an' cutters. You got us inter this scrape; now git us out of it."

"To be sure! To be sure!"

The skipper laughed grimly and surveyed the men with a sarcastic smile on his dark, strong-lined face. Decker was scarce thirty years of age, but he possessed a cool head, iron nerve, and the resourcefulness of a man accustomed to think and act quickly in time of danger.

"Yes," he continued ironically. "I got ye into this scrape, so it's up t' me t' git ye out, I cal'late! Nobody kin suggest any plans but t' heave th' booze overboard. Waal, I ain't a-goin' t' heave th' rum overboard—at least not ontil I see th' cutter overhaulin' us. Now, it's up to popper to quiet the children!

"Ye don't need t' fret over th' S'int Pierre racket. They ain't got no case ag'in' us. We niver dodged no arrest an' no warrant was sarved on us. They can't prove we killed that joker. He was in th' fight as well as all of us, so it's an accidental death. We niver rammed th' gun-boat—'twas th' *Cameron*. We kin prove that she wouldn't tack owin' to havin' no after-sail on her——"

"How about us all a-yellin' 'Hard up!' to her skipper?" asked a man.

"Waal, what ef we did? Are we th' blame pilots o' th' *Frances Cameron?* Her skipper won't say a word about that. He don't want that business t' git around. Th' law can't touch us, so don't worry. We're outside th' three-mile limit yet an' safe as a church."

Decker's explanations satisfied the crowd and they dispersed to their quarters swearing that he was "a dog of a feller" and a "downy son of a gun."

While the schooner glided to the south-'ard, the "downy one" paced the quarter

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absorbed in thought.

"Now, Commander Murray is in th' cutter lookin' for us. He knows th' *Quickstep* an' he knows we're bound for Anchorville with our trip. He knows we got liquor aboard and he knows we'd land it in no place but Decker's Island.

"Now, where'll th' cutter be? Where'd I be ef I was in his place? In behind Decker's Island. He won't come an' meet us 'cause he might miss us in th' dark. No, Decker's Island is where he'll hang around. He thinks we ain't wise, so he'll lie low around there an' keep his search-light a-goin' at night with a motor-boat or two handy so's they kin nip out an' ketch us ef we try t' skin away.

"All right! We'll hev some fun with th' cutter, an' ef I don't run that cargo o' stingo, I'm a Dutchman!"

Talking to himself and smoking the while, Captain Decker mapped out a plan of action, which to his mind, after he had reviewed it from all points, was a masterpiece of strategy; and after supper that evening he addressed the mystified crowd in the forecastle.

"We'll unbend th' balloon an' foretops'l an' send down our foretopm'st tonight," he said. "That'll make th' *Quickstep* look a trifle different. Some o' youse kin git busy an' make a length o' buoy-line fast to all them liquor-cases in th' kid——"

"What's th' game, skipper?"

"Do as I tell ye an' ye'll find out. I'm a-goin' t' jig Cap Murray tomorrow night an' ye'll see th' joke then. Now, hez any o' you fellers ever been on th' lobster-ground offn West Head?"

"I hev," replied a man.

"Good! Then you'll know where they set them traps off-shore?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll need you for particular business early in th' mornin'. In th' meantime you kin rouse out all th' bobbers an' floats we got aboard here. Cut 'em adrift from our gear an' hev them ready. We'll be off West Head at three ef this breeze holds, so ye'll git busy an' send that spar down right away."

IV

COMMANDER MURRAY of the Government cutter *Ariel* pored over a chart of the coast and addressed his Chief Officer.

"Decker left Miquelon on th' fifteenth an' with th' way th' wind has been, he should be off here tonight. We'll steam up an' down th' channel behind the Island there and ye'll see that all lights are screened. Have all hands ready for boarding and the boats out for launching. I'll get Skipper Decker tonight or bust. If I let him slip this time, the Department will have me on th' carpet for sure."

"How about th' search-light, sir? If we keep it playin' around he's liable to see it an' sheer off."

"I have made arrangements for that," replied the Commander. "Jones an' Thompson are out in motor-boats stationed at Colson's Point an' Tops'l Head. It ain't a very dark night an' they'll be able to see any vessel standin' in, even if they have their lights doused, for a vessel intendin' to make the Island will have to pass either of these places close aboard. When they sight anything, they'll swing a lantern three times so we won't use th' search-light unless we have to."

The mate smiled approval.

"We'll git him sure, sir," he said, "and ef we make a capture, it'll mean promotion for both of us; you to the new cutter an' me to this one."

The Commander nodded.

"And it ain't altogether the promotion, John, but it's th' chance of layin' Decker by th' heels. He's dodged me an' made a joke of me for so long now that I'd give anything to get my hands on him. You'll remember how he stripped that Norwegian bark that ran ashore off here and also that West Indie' boat.

"We raked his place and the Island for the loot, but never a sight of it did we get, and he goes struttin' around Anchorville braggin' about how he did me in the eye. And when he was in th' lobsterin' business —look how he bamboozled me then with his traps out th' whole o' th' close season. Yes! I'm sure anxious to get him."

At midnight, the look-outs on the cutter reported a signal from Topsail Head. Out from her hiding-place went the cutter, but the sight of four headsails and two wide-spaced masts against the skyline convinced Murray that it was only a coaster hugging the land.

"That ain't him," said the mate. "That's th' Bayport packet an' Tim Johnson wouldn't smuggle a plug o' tobacco to save

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his life. No use searchin' him."

At 1:30 A. M. they ran out again on signals. This time it was a fisherman and Murray boarded her in a boat, only to find that she was a La Have banker running in for ice and bait. The crowd of sleepy men who tumbled up on the hail of the watch knew nothing of the *Quickstep* except by reputation. They had not seen her, so the cutter's boat returned.

Just before the dawn, the shivering mate on the *Ariel's* bridge had a fancy that he heard the rattle of blocks and shackles come out of the darkness. Calling the Commander, he said:

"Seems t' me there's a vessel off there somewheres. I c'd hear her gear shakin'."

"I don't see any lights," said the other, peering into the gloom. "Any signal given?"

"No, sir!"

"Look-out, there! Have you seen or heard anything?"

"No, sir!"

"You must have imagined it," growled Murray. "A man fancies all kinds o' things when he's lookin' for somethin'——"

"But I'm quite sure there's a vessel off there, sir. Open out with th' search-light. It won't make any difference—it'll soon be daylight."

The Commander turned on the switch and the piercing beam penetrated the dark of the morning.

"Play her over to th' west'ard, sir," said the mate. The shaft of light swung around and disclosed a long toothpick fisherman lying to the wind off the Island.

"That's him, by Jupiter!" ejaculated mate and superior at once, and Murray rang down for full speed ahead.

"I've got him with th' goods this time!" cried the jubilant official. "No lights burnin'! He's out for business sure enough. Git that for'ard gun trained on that dodger an' call a boat's crew. He won't git away this time!"

Within ten minutes Commander Murray was in the boat and being pulled over to where the fishing-schooner lay illuminated in the glare of the cutter's search-light.

"Schooner ahoy! What vessel's that?"

"*Quickstep*. What's th' row?"

"Stand by! We're comin' aboard!"

Murray felt that his hour of triumph had come.

"All right, come ahead!" growled a voice which the Commander recognized as Decker's.

The officer, followed by four of the cutter's men, leaped over the *Quickstep's* rail.

"Now, sir!" said Murray, addressing Decker. "What are you doin' in here with your lights out?"

"My lights out?" cried Decker in surprise. "Surely ye're mistaken, Admiral! Them side-lights are both burnin'. Come for'ard an' see for yerself. Th' cook put fresh ile in them this mornin' so they sh'd be burnin'. Why, swamp me, they're both burnin'! Can't ye see them?"

Murray stifled an oath. The lights were burning all right.

"Darn funny they weren't visible a while ago!" he snapped.

"Warn't they?" Decker smiled ironically. "That's curious. Yer eyesight must be failin' ye, skipper—excuse me, I mean, Admiral. This is th' gravy-eye watch, y'know, an' a man's sight gits bad at this time in th' mornin'——"

"That's enough!" rasped Murray. "What are you doin' in here?"

"What am I doin' in here, Lootenong?" Decker's eyebrows expressed surprise at the question and the assembled gang sniggered audibly.

"Why, Commodore," he said, "we all live on that blame Island off thar'. What's t' hinder a man goin' ashore for a spell t' see his folks after bein' thirteen weeks to sea? Is that ag'in' th' law? Sure, I jest run in to put a dory over an' see th' wife afore makin' for Anchorville with th' first o' th' flood——"

"All right, Decker!" interrupted the other impatiently. "We'll get to business. I know what you came in here for, so don't lie about it. Where have you stowed that liquor you bought at Saint Pierre?"

"Liquor I bought at S'int Pierre, Lootenong?" repeated Decker. "Where else but under our belts! Sink me! Cain't a feller buy a few bottles o' brandy for a little sociable drink 'thout th' ruddy Gov'ment wantin' to know where it is? Come below an' hev a taste. Thar's a bottle or two left."

The revenue officer ignored the invitation.

"I'm goin' to search th' vessel. Muster your men in th' waist here! Bo'sun! Off with these hatches an' fetch th' lanterns out th' boat."

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For over an hour and a half the Commander and his men raked the *Quickstep* for contraband. The salt fish in the hold was prodded and overhauled; the drain-well probed; bunks turned out; dories hoisted out of the nests; gurry-kid and stays'l-box examined; and a man even crawled among the coal in the lazaretto under the cabin floor in the quest.

The search was thorough—so thorough that it was impossible for anything to have been concealed in the *Quickstep* from run to peak without the customs men finding it. Murray knew that Decker had bested him again, for all he could find was two full bottles of cognac in the skipper's locker.

"You ain't a-goin' t' charge me dooty on them two longnecks I hev, Lootenong?" said Decker humbly.

The other felt like a fool and raged inwardly at the fisherman's sarcasm.

"Look here, Decker," he said shortly, "you've had liquor aboard here with the intention of runnin' it in. Where is it?"

Captain Decker's attitude changed suddenly and there was a strident snap in his voice when he spoke.

"You're makin' accusations, Commander, which I've a mind t' bring ye t' book for. I got inter trouble enough at S'int Pierre 'thout lookin' for more. We come in here, as I've a right to do, an' you say our lights ain't burnin'. They are burnin', as you kin see. Then ye tarn to an' rake my vessel ontil ye know every timber an' bolt in her. Ye found nawthin'. Now, we've wasted enough time in shenanigan. I'm goin' ashore t' see my wife. You git back to yer ol' squib-shooter afore I heave ye over th' side for accusin' honest men——"

"Why is your foretopmast on deck?"

"An' why shouldn't it be after carryin' away our topm'st stay? Anythin' else that wants explainin' to yer brass-bound majesty?"

"No!" snapped the other. "You're clear so far. I'll keep my eye on you after this. Bo'sun! We'll get aboard!"

"Good night, an' thank ye kindly for th' visit, Admiral," jeered Decker as Murray went over the side. "It's men like you what made Nelson say, 'England expects that every son of a gun will pay th' dooty!' So long!"

"Nothin' doin'," said the disgruntled Commander when he returned to the cutter. "Not a thing to be found. I really don't think he tried to run liquor. He had quite a scrap up at the Islands and he wouldn't look for more trouble."

"Um," remarked the mate when the other had retired. "He don't know Mister Decker. He's a young bird, but he's a downy one jest th' same."

JOHN PETERSEN, storekeeper, lobster-buyer, and general agent, smacked his lips over the drink and murmured, "Happy Days!"

"Tell me about it again, skipper, for it's a yarn worth repeatin'. Ye h'ard that th' cutter 'ud be lookin' for ye from th' noospapers ye got from a vessel off Sambro, so what did ye do?"

"Waal, I knew he'd be around the Island here," replied the wily skipper, lighting up one of Petersen's no-duty-paid Havanas, "so I cal'lated thar' 'ud be no chanct o' landin' th' stuff in th' dories. Then I thought o' dumpin' all them cases overboard with a float tied to them, but that dodge 'ud be suspicious, as Murray might cotton an' go searchin' for a queer-lookin' float.

"I then thought o' th' fun he'd hev searchin' for sich a thing with all them lobster-buoys around this vicinity, an' that gimme the idea. He'd never bother pullin' up lobster-buoys with a Decker's Island fisherman's mark on them. Yes, says I, we'll dump them in shoal water with lobster buoys tied to each case, for it would be an easy job t' pick them up. A case at a time c'd easy be pulled an' landed by a lobsterman in his dory an' nobody 'ud be any th' wiser.

"We had no buoys aboard th' *Quickstep*, so I planned runnin' in off West Head an' cuttin' some o' their buoys adrift from their gear offshore—leavin' some of our bobbers an' trawl-floats in their place so's th' lobstermen wouldn't lose their traps. T' make sure we wouldn't be recognized doin' this, I had th' foretopm'st struck in case any one sh'd see us, but thar' was no danger.

"We got all th' buoys we wanted afore daylight an' hauled to sea again, so I didn't bother sendin' th' spar aloft as I sh'd ha' done ef we'd been seen on that lobster-ground.

"I jogged for a spell 'bout twenty mile to the east'ard till night afore runnin' in an' dumpin' th' stingo. I had gunny-sacks

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over th' lights while we put th' cases over th' side off Colson's Point in five fathom water.

"Man! But ye sh'd ha' seen old Murray's face when I showed him th' lights a-burnin'! Soon's he come alongside, I had th' cook whisk th' screens offn them an' he never caught on. Lord! But I sartainly rubbed it into him good that mornin'! He s'arched th' *Quickstep* from taffr'l to jumbo-stay, inside an' out——"

"Aye, an' he come ashore an' s'arched this place an' all th' sheds an' barns on the Island," said Petersen with a laugh. "Lord Harry, Captain Tom, but you're a dog! What with yer scrape at th' French Islands an' yer dodgin' th' cutter down here, you've sartainly been goin' some."

The other's face became serious and he spoke with something of weariness in the tone of his voice.

"Aye, Petersen, we've sartainly been goin' some! I ain't makin' friends by it, but 'twas excitin' while it lasted. S'int Pierre is a closed port to me now; th' *Frances Cameron's* crowd'll be lookin' for me, an' Cap Murray'll be overhaulin' me ivery time he gits a chanct. There ain't much money in that kind o' work, but 'tis lively goin' an' keeps th' barnacles offn a man.

"However, I ain't kickin'. Now, how'd it be ef we sent Captain Murray a couple o' bottles o' that S'int Pierre cognac with 'Captain Decker's Compliments'? "

The BLACK SHAME of the SOUTH IRISH

By W. Townend

THE rear guard plodded on slowly over the rough ground of the *nullah*, a narrow ravine twisting between the high walls of the Himalayas, and the subaltern in command turned and waited, biting his lips and frowning.

"Don't straggle! Color-Sergeant Telford, can't you keep those men from lagging?"

"Git on there!" said Telford. "Make haste, now!"

Some one laughed, and a low voice answered him:

"Arrah! What does be scarin' his lordship now? Would we be here if it wasn't for him? Is it Pathans that he sees down the *nullah*, or what?"

"You, Devlin!" said the Color-Sergeant. "You stop it! You'll be apt to hear from me later, I'm thinkin'."

A shot rang out from the top of the cliff and a private threw up his arms and fell forward on his face, groaning. Two of the soldiers raised their rifles and fired.

"What's the use?" said one of them. "Aimin' at nothin'!"

Telford bent over the wounded man.

"Are ye hurt, Murphy? Where is it they hit ye?"

He straightened up and stared at the officer with a feeling of dull anger.

There was a moment's indecision.

"I can't see any sign of them, Telford; can you?" said the subaltern.

"See thim!" said Telford impatiently. "No, sir, I can't. We'd betther be pushin' on. No use in sthoppin' here, sir."

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"Come on, then," said the subaltern.

"Three of ye—Flanagan, an' Kelly, an' Sims, you—take up Murphy an' carry him. Gintly, now!"

And once again the rear guard moved on down the *nullah*.

"An'," said the Color-Sergeant to himself, "Murphy won't be the only wan. We're too far behind to be safe."

There was another shot, and a man in front of him tripped over a large stone and lay very still. The soldiers began to fire wildly at the cliff-tops that towered above their heads. The three who carried the wounded man laid their burden down. The subaltern made a choking noise in his throat and shouted a string of incoherent orders which no one obeyed. Telford gave a shrug of his broad shoulders and swore softly.

The firing ceased. No sound broke the stillness save the quick indrawn breathing and the shuffle of feet. High up in the sky a vulture floated, a black speck against the blue.

Telford stooped over the man who had been shot.

"Owld Fergusson's gone," he said. "Come on, three more of ye. Quick, now! Kennedy, you; an' Keelan, an' O'Toole."

"God hilp us!" said one of the others. "Let's git out of this as soon as we can. They can see us an' we can't see thim, an'——"

"Will ye dhrop it?" said Telford. "Kape that tongue of yours quiet, O'Brien, or I'll give ye a wipe over the jaw that will make ye. D'ye hear me! Pick up that rifle!" He glanced at the slim, well knit figure of the young officer. "Misther Kinard," he said, "I'm goin' to foller with Hartigan an' O'Grady an' O'Hara. You push on ahead, sir, with Corp'ral Andherson an' the rest of thim. There's too many corners."

"Yes, of course, Color-Sergeant. Of course. Get on, you men; hurry now!"

And a voice retorted, "An' don't we be wantin' to hurry as much as yerself?"

To which, if he heard it, the subaltern made no reply.

Hartigan, a square-jawed, bullet-headed private, spat in deep scorn.

"The young coward! Did ye notice him?"

"Stow yer gab, Hartigan!" said Telford roughly. But a hard expression came over his sun-tanned face and his teeth closed down over his lower lip.

"I'd give a month's pay to be out of this everlastin' *nullah*, anyway," said Hartigan. "It 'ull be dark before we git into camp at this rate."

O'Hara, a tall, thin youngster, chuckled.

"Lit's hope we'll be takin' tay with the Mohmands before that," he said easily.

"Tay!" said O'Grady. "It 'ull be more than tay they'll be givin'."

"Let's be movin'," said Telford; and they followed slowly, halting from time to time and scanning the high cliffs, ready for what might happen at any moment.

"I've a notion that some wan is eyin' me," said O'Grady. "There's no use dhelayin' more than we have to."

Telford shook his head.

"Runnin' wouldn't be savin' us now," he said; "not if——"

Even as he spoke he saw on the crest of the cliff the quick movement of a man slinking to the shelter of a rock. He whipped his rifle to his shoulder and pulled the trigger, and in answer came the crash of musketry and the heavy thud of bullets on the stones.

"Come on!" he shouted, and they raced down the *nullah* toward the scattered groups of soldiers firing at an invisible foe.

"I towld ye so," said O'Hara, grinning. "We're none too late for the party. The tay is now bein' sarved."

"Stheady on!" shouted Telford as he came up. "You, McGinnis an' Neligan, don't be wastin' yer carthridges!" A bullet grazed his cheek and he dropped to his knees behind a huge boulder, swearing. "O'Hara, ye young idjut, what are ye sthandin' up for? Git down at wance!"

Kelly toppled over in a heap with his arms and legs sprawling, and the blood soaking into the brown earth.

"TELFORD!" The Color-Sergeant glanced around and saw as in a dream the face of the subaltern, gray-white and dirty, with little beads of sweat on the forehead and the blue eyes full of terror. "Telford, for Heaven's sake, what are we going to do?"

He clawed at the Color-Sergeant's shoulder.

"Do!" said Telford, flinging him off. "Fight, sir. What ilse?"

He sighted carefully at some bushes opposite, but the subaltern clawed at him once more.

"Telford——"

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"Confound you, Misther Kinard, can't ye lave me alone?"

"We must get out of here, Color-Sergeant. Understand! We've got to push on—push on, Telford, at once."

Kennedy sank down on to his hands and knees with a little grunt and then slowly collapsed.

"That's two dead an' two wounded," said Telford grimly. "Misther Kinard, pull yerself together, sir. Can we abandon our wounded an' dead?"

"N-no, I didn't mean that, Telford, of course not. We must stay with our wounded, mustn't we?" He loaded his carbine with trembling fingers.

Telford uttered a short laugh.

"What's the matther with that blissed orficer of ours?" growled Hartigan. "What's that he's afther sayin' about the wounded?"

"Mother of God! Oh, Mother of God!" Kennedy was moaning to himself. "Can't ye sthop it, some wan? Can't ye sthop it? They've shot me to pieces——"

The Color-Sergeant waited, finger on trigger, listening to the sharp crack of the rifles and the low groans of the wounded man at his side. A head showed above a rock on the cliff and he fired.

"Let's hope that's another of thim Pathans gone to Paradise an' iverlastin' glory!"

"Color-Sergeant!" The subaltern, lying at full length behind the same boulder, was speaking to him again.

"Well, what ails ye now?"

"We'll be killed if we wait here, Telford. They've forgotten us; they've left us to be killed. To be killed, Telford; do you understand?"

"And what of that?" said Telford with a sudden rush of contempt. "Think of the men, Misther Kinard! Pull yerself together, an' fight."

"But it's no use—it's no use. We can do nothing—nothing at all."

"Oh! to blazes with ye!" said Telford. He leaned over and struck the officer with his open hand on the cheek. "There!" he said. "Perhaps that will put some shame in ye. Fight, ye bleeding coward!"

"It's no good—no good!" said the subaltern with a sob. "We can't keep them off. It's no good, Telford." He jumped to his feet, unmindful of the bullets that swept by him. "I can't! I can't!"

He turned and made off down the *nullah*, staggering weakly as he ran.

A young soldier with a smooth face and a trickle of blood on his chin stood up.

"If the orficers is goin', I'll be —— if I sthay to be killed."

"Pierce," shouted Telford, "you sthop where ye are! Come back this minute, you——"

Devlin and Flanagan followed at his heels. Sick at heart, Telford watched Devlin stagger and topple over in a heap. The panic seemed to be spreading from man to man. O'Brien rose to his feet and Telford caught him by the ankle and flung him heavily.

"You at laste will not go. Fight, ye scut, Belfast dock-rat, fight, or I'll run ye through with me bay'nit! Ye hear me!"

And then at a warning yell he turned his head.

A small body of men clad in garments of dirty white were rushing toward them, sword in hand, down the *nullah*.

"Here come the Ghazis! Up ye git, O'Brien! Let 'em have it, bhoys! Aim low!"

He fired, and a man leaped into the air and fell, clawing at the stones as he died; two more went down before the Ghazis were on them.

O'Hara sprang forward with a laugh, parried the sweep of a long knife and bayoneted his man.

"That's for you!" he said. Before he could free his rifle he was borne under by the rush. Telford shot the Ghazi who had cut him down. There was a brief scurry among the rocks, a moment's blind hacking and thrusting, the crack of rifles, and then a strange hush.

TELFORD found himself staring at the heap of twisted, quiet bodies on the ground. He felt tired; his throat was dry and parched, his hands were shaking.

"They got O'Grady," said a voice. "Poor owld O'Grady!"

"Devlin didn't get far before he was killed, did he?" said Hartigan.

From afar off there came the sudden roll of volleys.

"That 'ull be some of our fellas dhrivin' thim off," said Telford. He threw a glance at the walls of the *nullah;* and then, putting down his rifle, dragged a dead Ghazi from off the mound of bodies.

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O'Hara struggled to raise himself. He gave a little moan and sank back, the blood smearing his face and the front of his jacket.

Telford knelt by his side.

"Howlt hard, Jack; don't thry an' do too much. Wait till I undo yer belt an' things. That's right. Take it aisy, now!" He clicked his tongue in sudden pity. "Here, Andherson, give me a hand with this."

"Man alive!" said the big corporal. "What in the worrl' made ye run at thim the way ye did? Ye shouldn't have."

"Me heart lep' to me mouth whin I seen ye go undher," said Hartigan. "O'Hara, ye have the divil's own pluck in ye!"

"There!" said Telford, when they had bandaged the gash in his side. "That's all we can do now till we rache camp. Pray Hiven they be afther us soon."

"Be cripes!" It was McGinnis speaking. "I thought I was gone whin he came at me with his sword flashin'. I was more surprised whin he was killed than he was. That's the owld fella, there—him with the crooked beak on him."

"Did ye see thim, the way they'd be chargin', an' thim chock full of bullets! Faith! 'Tis thim Ghazis that can fight!"

The men talked loudly, carelessly, now and again breaking into gusts of laughter.

Telford listened, in a kind of daze, not daring to meet their eyes.

THE clatter of musketry grew louder.

"How many did——"

He stopped and swallowed uneasily. Then he turned and stared at the men of the rear guard, as if he saw them for the first time. Their khaki uniforms were torn and stained from many weeks' campaigning; their accouterments were shabby and filthy; their faces, brick-red under their big helmets, were unshaven and caked with sweat and dust.

Telford scowled. What were they waiting for? Couldn't they speak and have done with it? Or must he?

The faces he saw were grim and cruel and scornful, the faces of men who knew their rights and would have them.

"Well," he said finally, "we're safe enough now. But we must sthop here till they fitch us. It won't be long now till we're back in camp."

"Indeed!" said Hartigan lighting his pipe. "Indeed, now! An' I wondher if by anny chance we'll be comin' across anny of our orficers. Had we wan with us whin we stharted out this mornin'? I forgit." He flicked the match across at Keelan. "Tim, did ye see anny orficers hangin' around whin the firin' comminced, do ye know? Are ye acquainted with the Reg'mint? Royal South Irish Fusiliers is what they call us."

"Orficers is it?" said Keelan. "That pukin' little swine! Did ye see him leggin' it down the *nullah?*"

"To fitch reënforcemints, no doubt!" said Neligan in a slow drawl. "Yerrah! The coward!"

O'Toole stretched his hands above his head and yawned.

"Ey-ah! An' to hear him whin there's no bullets flyin' aroun'! 'Sargint, take that man's name fer bein' dhirty on parade, an' see that he has an hour's extry dhrill. Whin will some of you rechruits larn that ye can niver be soldhiers until ye know how to kape yersel's clane?' "

O'Brien looked up from one of the dead Ghazis whose body he was searching industriously.

"I seen him sthart to his feet, the blasted coward, an' run like the divil was afther him——"

"Ah!" said Telford dryly. "I've no doubt. An' the liss ye say the betther, O'Brien. If I'm not mistaken, I seen ye doin' yer besht to foller him. But whin an orficer takes it into his head to go, it's not for a Belfast corner-bhoy like you to be sthayin' behind."

There was a low laugh.

"Well," said Hartigan, "he won't hush this up in a hurry, that's wan thing. There's how many of us is afther seein' him? Oh, yis! It's glad I am that I'm not in Misther Kinard's shoes this minute. There'll be no kapin' this quiet. Do ye remimber in South Africa, that time the owld Sheepsthealers were cut up, how that young orficer of theirs——"

"Iv'ry Reg'mint through the length an' breadth of Injia will be talkin' this over by the ind of the campaign," said Telford. "Do we not know how it will be? Wan of our orficers, wan of the South Irish, wint off an' lift his men to fight as they best could without him, lift his wounded an' dead without a thought. It makes me sick, bhoys, to think of it."

"Can we not kape it quiet, somehow?" said Anderson.

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Hartigan spat.

"Yis, but how? Where is Misther Kinard now? If he wint down the *nullah*, which he did, he's most likely run into the other throops. What will he tell thim, eh? They will be comin' back—— No, it's no good. There's not wan man in the Batthalion that will not have heard of it by ev'nin'."

For a while no one spoke, and then Keelan stood up.

"Here they are at lasht! An' what in the worrl' will ye say, Color-Sargint?"

Far down the *nullah* a body of troops came into sight around a corner. The men of the rear guard watched them in silence.

"That's Danny Keane in front there. Does any wan see Misther Kinard?" asked McGinnis. "What will ye say if he's not there?"

"I'll shpake the thruth to Captain Keane," said Telford in a surly voice. "An' now, p'r'aps, some of you fellas 'ull be kind enough to fall in, if it's not discommodin' yez. Look sharp now. An' don't say a word of what's happened till we know if they know. If they ax, say he was cut off —in the fight."

A big, broad-shouldered officer strode up at the head of his men, grinning as though at some jest.

"Hullo, Telford! Looks as if you'd been having a nice little scrap, eh? Quite like old times, isn't it?" He turned and spoke to a sergeant who was with him. "Hurry up those *dhoolies*, will you, Henderson?"

Telford waited for the questions that he knew would follow.

"The Ghazis rushed you, did they?"

"Yes, sir; but there was only a few of thim. The fellas on the cliffs must have seen ye comin', as they wint off all of a sudden."

"Lost pretty heavily, eh?" said the officer in a careless tone. "Where's Mr. Kinard, Color-Sergeant?"

They were standing some yards away from the nearest man, yet Telford dropped his voice to a low whisper.

"What's that, sir?" he said. "You—you've not——" He stared at the officer in dull amazement. "Why, sir, he's—he's gone."

"Ah! Dead, is he?"

"No, sir," said Telford gruffly. "He's not."

Captain Keane studied him for a moment without saying a word. Then:

"Well, what is it, Telford? He's not here, and he's not dead. Perhaps you'll explain. Where's Mr. Kinard?"

Telford shivered.

"Ye want me to tell ye, sir?"

"Good Heavens, man! I'm not asking you riddles."

"Well, he's gone, sir. Ran away. There! You axed me, sir, an' ye have it. He bolted an' lift us to fend for ourselves, wounded an' all."

The officer's lean, brown face grew very stern and hard.

"Ah! you mean he was lost in the retirement, don't you, Color-Sergeant?"

"Beg yer pardon, sir? Misther Kinard, sir, he ran away."

"The officers of the South Irish Fusiliers do not run in action," said Captain Keane with a far-off look in his eyes.

"Very good, sir," said Telford slowly, watching the little groups of men lifting the dead and wounded into the *dhoolies*. "Very good. He fought as well as a man could fight. But there's wan thing; why did he go off like he did? What made him take three of the men, sir, an' go chasin' down the *nullah?*"

"Ah! Let me see. He—— By the way, where did he get to, Telford? None of us saw him. He turned off from the main *nullah*, of course; lower down. I think, Telford, he must have gone in pursuit of some of the Ghazis whom you had driven off after they had crept up between you and the rest of us. Yes, that's what he did. Understand?"

"Yes, sir, I undhersthand. He wint off —afther Pathans. I'll tell the others. But I hope, sir, that he doesn't git back to camp before we do."

"It looks as if we're about ready to move off," said the officer. He raised his voice. "Got them all in, Sergeant Henderson? All right, then. Get on, now, as fast as you can." And to Telford: "Keep your crowd together as much as possible. They mustn't talk."

"Divil a bit, sir," said Telford. "I'm afther warnin' thim."

He shouldered his rifle and trudged off down the *nullah*, pondering in his mind as to what would happen. An officer of the South Irish had left his men to fight as best they could without him; had turned his back on the enemy. It was impossible, and yet true.

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What would the other officers say when they heard? For they would hear, whether the rank and file did or not. Surely Kinard must have known that being killed was nothing beside what they would do to him now. The drunkenest defaulter in the Regiment was a better soldier than he was. Even O'Brien.

There was no pity in Telford's heart: only a dazed horror. But he wondered what Kinard would say when they found him. Would he try and brazen it out? Or would he disgrace them all by——

CAPTAIN KEANE was speaking.

"Sir?" he said.

They had come to an open rocky space where the *nullah* forked into two.

"He went up that way to the right. I think, Telford, that we'd better take a few men and try and fetch him back. We won't go too far, but——" He broke off in an absent-minded way, and stood smoothing his small, stubbly, black mustache away from his lips.

"Sergeant Henderson, I'm going up this *nullah* here, with Color-Sergeant Telford. Wait here till we get back, please."

"An' the *dhoolies*, sir?" said Henderson.

"No. Corporal East, you take the *dhoolies* on ahead. Understand? Henderson, you'd better keep nine or ten men with you here, and the rest East can have."

He paused and looked at Telford as if expecting him to say something.

"We'll need some men with us, sir, won't we?"

"Yes, bring along—oh, about eight or so."

Telford nodded.

"Corp'ral Andherson, an' you, McGinnis, we'll want you; an' Hartigan, O'Brien, Keelan, Sims, Neligan an' O'Toole. That 'ull be all."

They moved off down the narrow ravine that branched off to the right.

"Mind what you're doing now," said the officer. "You don't know how many Pathans may be hanging around still."

"Do ye think, sir," said Telford, "that he has——"

"I don't know," said the officer. "Men will do queer things at times——"

They clambered over the rocks in silence. Some distance ahead of them Keelan and Sims and Neligan were staring at something in a small hollow.

"Here's wan of them, sir," Keelan said. "It's Pierce. An' he's dead."

"An' they cut him to pieces," said Sims in a dull tone. "All to pieces, they did. The poor fella! Waited for him an' cut him to pieces as he passed."

"Get on!" said the officer. "Leave him till we come back."

Telford glanced at the poor maimed body of the boy who had followed his officer rather than stay and be killed. A ray of hope had crept into his mind. Pierce was dead. He wondered whether it were wrong to hope that even yet they might hide their shame.

He tramped on, looking neither to the right nor to the left, afraid of what might meet his eyes at any moment, and yet still more afraid that what he wanted might not be there for him to see.

A shout broke in on his thoughts.

"Here's Flanagan, sir."

"Poor owld Pat!" he muttered. "He was to have taken his discharge this Autumn."

"Did Flanagan go, too?" said Captain Keane in a low voice. "What makes a man like that lose his head? A good soldier, Telford; one of the best in the Regiment. Good God! They were running, too." He pointed to the marks of feet in the dust. "Chased them down the *nullah;* see!"

"They were in a hurry," said Telford.

"I'm not surprised. We were coming up as hard as we could. And there were troops out on each side as well."

The ground rose steeply between the walls of rock, which were lower and less precipitous.

Hartigan pointed to a mark on a stone.

"D'ye see, sir? That's blood!"

They kept on in silence. Keelan waited at a corner of the *nullah.*

"Well?" said the officer. "Well, man, what is it?"

"We found him sir; he's killed," he said thickly. "Misther Kinard."

They turned the corner, and there in an open space amid the rocks and boulders they came upon all that was left of Lieutenant Kinard, of the Second Battalion of the Royal South Irish Fusiliers.

"Poor, poor devil!" said Captain Keane, stooping over him.

Telford, not understanding, rested on his rifle, a cold, dead feeling in his heart.

Anderson was whispering to him.

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"What's that?" he said.

"In the back. They chased him and hacked him to pieces. He didn't even make a fight of it. Died with his back to them."

Telford caught his breath and stared at the boyish face of the dead officer. He felt neither scorn nor sorrow—only a deep relief and thankfulness.

Captain Keane raised his head; and in his eyes was a look of suffering, as if he had seen his own honor taken from him. When he spoke, it was not as an officer talking to some of his non-commissioned officers and privates, but as one man to his equals.

"There'll be no talking when we get back to camp, remember! The poor chap's dead, and it doesn't matter a hang how he died. Mr. Kinard and the two others went in pursuit of some Ghazis who attacked you from the rear. They followed them down this fork of the *nullah* and were killed, fighting against big odds.

You understand? The Pathans were making their way along here in force. They'd have wiped you out but for Mr. Kinard and the other two. Stick to that story, whatever you do. No one will ever know that you're not speaking the truth."

He stood up and immediatelyhe became the officer once more.

"Now, then!" he ordered. "Three of you take him up."

As they bore their dead back to the main *nullah*, it seemed to Telford that Captain Keane had suddenly grown older. His back was not so straight, his head hung forward, his feet dragged through the dust and stumbled over the stones.

"Takes it to heart, Danny Keane does," said Hartigan, who helped to carry the dead subaltern.

"A real man, Danny," said Keelan. "But, my God—this thing died without thryin' to fight; with his back to thim, running! He let thim kill him—wan of our orficers!"

"The son of his father," said Telford quietly.

Hartigan uttered a grim laugh.

"Oh, God, yis! The son of his father! Is it fer the sake of the father or the son that we're afther promisin' to kape this to ourselves?"

"Nayther," said Telford. "'Tis for the sake of the Reg'mint an' Danny Keane."

THAT evening, when the bugles had wailed their last sad good-by over those who had fallen in the *nullah*, and the earth had been shoveled into the long, shallow grave, Telford sat on a flat-topped rock by himself, smoking and watching the afterglow fading from the sky.

Some one touched him on the shoulder.

He turned and saw Hartigan and Keelan. They looked at him without speaking.

"Well?" he said presently. "What is it?"

"Ye heard the bugles, did ye not, Color-Sargint?" asked Hartigan.

"What of that?"

"Ye know who they were blowin' for, don't ye? How many did that orficer of ours kill? Have ye counted the cost of this day's worrk?"

"Kill!" Telford licked his dry lips.

"Out of all the fellas that was with him in the *nullah* how many come out alive? Flanagan, Pierce, Devlin, they run whin he run; they're gone. Kelly—he had the cot nixt me for the lasht two years—he was killed. Fergusson was killed. O'Grady was killed. That makes six. Murphy's wounded. Kennedy is dyin' this very minute, an' young O'Hara is all cut to pieces."

"What's that about Kennedy?" asked Telford. "Is he bad?"

"I was just afther hearin' that he won't see the mornin'," said Hartigan. "That orficer of ours has killed six, if not sivin, of us fellas. Was he worth that much? He was not. Ye know it as well as I do."

"But fer him we would have rethired long before we did," said Keelan. "He waited for no reason but that ye said it was time to go.

" 'I'm in command here, Color-Sargint,' he says. Were we not list'nin'? A pup like that! He's an orficer—or he was, I mane—an' we only common soldhiers boun' to do as he tells us! Is it fair?"

"I've seen good men lose their heads before now," said Telford slowly. "Flanagan, f'r instance. What made him run the way he did? Do ye remember Pat Flanagan at Joubert's Spruit in the shpring of nineteen aught two?"

"Yis, but this man was not a man like Flanagan was. An insolint little cub of a boy, consated an' ill-mannered. You remember whose son he is. It's quare, whin ye come to think of it. The father, an' what he done; an' thin the son. Ye might have ixpicted it almost. The cruelest owld divil

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that iver broke a man's heart! Whin did he iver show mercy to man, woman or child?"

"Niver yit," said Telford, sucking at his empty pipe. "Niver yit, Hartigan."

"He dhruv me out of the counthry. Rint! For God's sake! Where was there anny rint to come from that year? Not the rint that they was axin' for that little bit of a place. An' he had a spite ag'in' me annyway, just fer killin' a few mis'rable birds that was no use to him nor no wan.

"An' O'Grady the same. O'Grady, he got sint to prison. Did he show him anny mercy? He did not. An' did ye iver hear of O'Grady's wife? He was married wance. She died in childbirth while he was in jail. There was no ividence; the consthab'lary had to git some wan, of course. They swore it was O'Grady that done it, but Jim O'Grady had no hand in the worrk that brought him to jail. I know.

"Pierce an' O'Hara the same. O'Hara can tell ye. A cruel, cruel man—rich an' proud an' cruel. He howlds his head high, does he not? He looks down on dhirt like us. But, by Hiven! if we are dhirt, what must that whelp of his have been—him, that's cryin' in purgathory this minute? Killed six of us an' ran to save his own skin!

"An' the wounded? Do we lave our wounded within rache of the Pathans? Or our dead, even? An' they say this his father is proud of him!"

Telford stared heavily at the valley with the twinkling fires of the camp, and the mountains clear and huge against the pale-yellow sky.

"He's a starn owld man, is Major-Gin'ral Kinard," he said. "He sarved with the Reg'mint long ago times, an' commanded thim in Aigypt in eighty-two. Cruel he may be; but he's brave at laste, which was more than his son was. He has the Cross, ye know—he won that in the Afghan campaign thirty years ago. Near here, too.

"An' maybe, whin all's said an' done, I have more cause to hate him than anny wan of yez. He got my father sint to jail, an' broke my mother's heart. In thim times there was always throuble—boycottin', an' such-like. But they towld me my father had no more to do with the shootin' of owld Dunblaney than an unborn babe. The ividince wouldn't have been sufficient to hang a cat.

"Yit it was through him that my father wint to Kilmainham. Whin he come out, he was an owld, broken man. He died soon afther; an' me, I joined the Reg'mint. That was in eighteen-ninety—eighteen years ago; an' I've been with it iver since. A long time whin ye look back an' see the changes. But niver, niver did I think that I should live to see wan of our orficers desartin' his men an' his wounded."

He paused and shivered.

"It 'ull be cowld tonight."

"There's orficers an' orficers," said Keelan. "Whin did Misther Kinard iver give wan of us a civil worrd? We were ordinarry privates, just Tommies. He was an orficer, with money to spind, good clothes to wear; a fine-lookin' young gintleman he was, a liftenant in the Second Batthalion of the Royal South Irish Fusiliers—the owld Tipperary Tigers.

"But was he fit to sthand by the side of Jack O'Hara? He was not, an' there's not a man in the Reg'mint but knows it. I wondher what would Major-Ginral Kinard say if he heard! Would he sthill howld up his head like ye say he does?"

"Is there no way we can git back at him for what he an' his son have done to us?" said Hartigan, as if talking to himself. "If his house were to catch fire now, or maybe——"

"That 'ull do!" said Telford sharply. "Ye let yer tongue run away with ye. Wan of these days——"

A TALL figure loomed up out of the twilight, and the two privates drifted away silently.

"That you, Telford?"

"It's me, Henderson."

Sergeant Henderson stood facing him with his arms folded.

"Telford, how did young Kinard come to be where he was today?"

"Kinard!" said Telford, and he gulped weakly. The question that he had feared had been asked. "Why—why, he was hot-footin' it afther some Pathans that had taken us in the r'ar.

"Misther Kinard turned an' made for thim, with two men only—Pierce an' Pat Flanagan. Towld us to wait, an' wint off afther thim. Ye know what mad things a fella will be doin' whin he has his blood up. Well, he dhruv thim down the *nullah* on an' on, away up to the right there—ye remember where the *nullah* forked; an' he must have run into about thirty or forty of thim.

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He died fightin', him an' Pierce an' Flanagan."

Henderson spat with cold deliberation.

"He died fightin' bravely, no doubt! But, Telford, I saw the body before it was covered. That story will do as well as another, of course. But how is it that there was no footmarks down the *nullah* there—only him an' two others?

"It's not blind that I am. He died fightin'? Well an' good! Thank God, it was our own fellas that found him an' not Native throops! The South Irish, by Hiven! Our orficers do not go wandherin' off from their men chasin' to the r'ar; nor do they die, as a gen'ral rule, with their wounds in their backs. Pray God thim fellas kape their mouths shut!"

"They've nothin' to kape their mouths shut about," said Telford. "He died fightin'."

"Of course, an' since that is what you're afther agreein' to say, it's as well to have plinty of practise. Yis, he died fightin', same as the orficers of the South Irish always does."

He laughed scornfully, and Telford hugged his knees and said nothing. The camp-fires were burning red; the hum of voices had died away to a low murmur; a sentry challenged in the distance.

"Ey-ah!" he said wearily. "I wondher if we'll be kept up here all Summer."

"Sure an' we will. We must give that Sufi Mullah, or whativer it is that he does be callin' himself, a batin' while we are at it. In two months from now, Telford, we'll sthill be picnickin' up here, fightin' the Mohmands. An' what's more, by that time there will be things happenin'. The Afridis will be on the move same as in ninety-sivin, an' maybe the Afghans as well."

II

TELFORD remembered this prophecy of Henderson's three weeks later, as he marched with his company through thick clouds of dust in the wake of a mountain battery. The man nearest him was Hartigan.

"An' why are they withdrawin' us?" he was saying. "Not wan dacint fight among the lot. What's the use of it, eh, Color-Sargint? What harm have we done thim? Divil a bit!"

"Maybe it's as well," said Telford presently. "Yerself knows 'tis convanient maneuverin' that's provided by the Pathans. If we are not too sevare on thim, why, thin there's the prospict of a fight iv'ry year or two.

"It's good for the youngsthers. What's field-thrainin' alongside the real thing? An' there's the Native throops. Would they be j'inin' the Arrmy if there was no hope of a fight iver? It's thrainin' for the Rooshians that the Pathans do be givin' us."

"What's that you're saying?" said a voice; and Telford found Captain Keane marching at his side.

"'Tis a theory of my own, sir," he said, shifting his rifle to his other shoulder. "I was sayin' that the Pathans are a most convanient method of thrainin' the youngsthers."

"Like to come up here every Spring, Telford?"

"God forbid! I've done my share, sir, an' I'm ready to do it again, whin it's necessary; but I'm thinkin' that I'll be glad to be back in cantonmints again. Ye can git tired of the best of things if ye have too much of thim."

The officer laughed.

"Yes, we've seen our share, you and I."

"We have that, sir. An' the more I see of it, the more I wondher why we each of us kape on prayin' for the day whin we're to take the field ag'in. There was Chithral in ninety-five, that was the first; an' thin the Soudahn, Atbara an' Omdurman, the next year. An' the year afther we wint to South Africa for three years; an' in aught-three we had a few months in Somaliland; an' here we are wance more.

"There's times whin I almost hope I'll be out of the Arrmy before the nixt campaign. An' that's a sign that a man's gittin' on in years, sir, whin he begins to think things like that."

They were on the top of a small rise, on a higher level than the rest of the company. Telford looked ahead and saw the rows upon rows of helmets moving up and down, and the sun shining on the rifles, the mules of the mountain battery, the dust and the high hills in the distance. He turned his head and found Captain Keane smiling at him.

"The Army wouldn't be much use without the old soldier, Telford," he said.

"With all due respects, sir," said Telford, "'tis the youngsthers that is the backbone of the sarvice. Whin ye're five-an'-thirty,

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why, thin ye begin to think; an' maybe ye don't want to take chances because there's the wife an' childher. An' does that hilp, sir?"

"It doesn't, God knows! But I don't care, Telford; give me the man with twelve years' service when it comes to a tight corner. He's worth half a dozen two-year youngsters any day."

"Do ye rimimber that day at Ladysmith, at Cæsar's Camp, sir; that corp'ral of the Stand-Fasts? Would that be the kind of owld soldhier that ye'd be wantin', sir?"

"That's only the one case, Telford. The exception. He had a bad streak in him, that man. He ought never to have been a soldier. He hadn't the heart. Blame it on the way he was raised; a London slum, perhaps, and a drunken father."

Telford nodded.

"Yis, a bad father, a bad son. I've heard that, sir. An' what of those who do not come from the slums, sir? Thim with iv'ry advantage that we others have not had! In this campaign that's just past I have seen things that I niver hoped to see. Things that I would not have believed possible."

The officer glanced at him quickly.

"Not in this Battalion," he said.

"Oh, no, sir; not in this Batthalion, of course," said the Color-Sergeant; and he saw in his mind's eye the deep *nullah*, with the yellow-gray sun-splashed walls and the blue shadows, and the crouching figures firing, and the red on the stones, and a man running. . . . "His father's son," he said in a low tone. "What hope was there for him?"

"Who's that, Telford?"

"I was thinkin' of that fella at Cæsar's Camp, who did what no man should have done, father or no father. 'Tis the young soldhiers that are the besht fighters, sir; to my mind, at anny rate."

For some time they marched without speaking. Telford listened to the tramping of heavy boots, and the chatter of voices, and the clink of metal; in his nostrils was the smell of hot leather and sweat, and damp clothing and tobacco smoke.

"Well," said the officer, "maybe you're right, Telford. Maybe you're right." He halted and looked back. "Now, then, you men, don't drag the pace. Close up a bit."

Telford marched on, his eyes half shut in the glare. A bad father; a bad son. Danny Keane was right there. And the son had killed—how many was it? Six; seven, with Kennedy. Seven good men had he killed—and two wounded. Telford whistled softly. But no one had ever called the father a coward, whatever else he might be.

That night as Captain Keane was visiting the sentries, accompanied by Telford, there came the faint crack of a rifle at long range. Men, suddenly awakened, jumped to their feet and seized their rifles. A man sobbed in the darkness. Then all of a sudden there was silence.

"Another o' thim blasted snipers," said a voice.

"Who was it?" Captain Keane asked. "Any one hurt?"

The same voice answered. "It's Corp'ral Andherson, sir. He's dead."

EARLY the next morning, before the column started, Hartigan, gray under the tan, his eyes bloodshot, plucked at Telford's sleeve.

"Another gone," he said. "That makes wan liss of thim that saw. Are we none of us to git out of this alive? Is it a currse on us for our lies? They does be sayin' in the Reg'mint we should niver have lit him go—that he wint to his death to save us. 'Tis cruel hard on us that we should kape silent. An' they're afther writin' home to his father an' sayin' he died a hairo."

"Hartigan," said the Color-Sergeant with grim earnestness, "you brathe a worrd of this—wan worrd—an' I'll br'ak iv'ry bone in yer body. I mane it."

"Oh, I won't spake. I gave me oath. But, Color-Sargint, if I iver live to see Irelan' ag'in it's Major-Gin'ral Kinard that 'ull be sorry. There's Kennedy gone, an' Andherson, besides thim that wint in the *nullah*. An' maybe Murphy an' Jack O'Hara will be the ——"

"That will do," said Telford. "Be off with ye! The bugles will be soundin' the "*Fall in!*" in a minute or two. Make haste, now!"

But all that long day, as he marched through the dust, plodding slowly with the company after a long line of baggage animals, Telford brooded on what Hartigan had said to him. But then Hartigan was a fool, of course.

He tried to turn his thoughts to other things, but always unbidden there came into his mind the fight in the *nullah*—Kelly

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falling with his hands to his face, O'Hara laughing as he charged the Ghazis, O'Grady cut to pieces, and the officer whispering in his ear that it was no use fighting, that they must save themselves. And then in Ireland, the father; a stern old man, proud of his son.

They had promised Danny Keane. For the sake of the Regiment they must keep their secret. But was the father to live in the belief that his son was a man? Would he continue for the rest of his days to look down on such as them—the men whom his son was after deserting under fire?

It was hot, and the going hard; Telford bared his teeth in a savage grin. Why should they not tell the truth to the one man in the world who would not speak of it if he knew? Why not? It would be no more than he deserved. His son was a coward, and they would tell him of his death, sparing him nothing, showing him no mercy, as he had shown them none.

He was strong and rich and powerful, but there was the one way they could hurt him. They would show him what manner of son he had been so proud of.

One of the men near him began to sing, and the others took up the refrain:

"When Johnny comes marchin' home ag'in,
Hurrah, hurrah!
We'll give him a hearty welcome then,
Hurrah, hurrah!
The men shall cheer, the bhoys shall shout,
The ladies they shall all turn out,
And we'll all feel gay,
When Johnny comes marchin' home."

Telford laughed.

"They won't be so —— pleased to see some of us whin *we* come marchin' home!" he muttered.

"What's that, Sargint?" said Hartigan.

"Nothin'."

For reasons of his own he said no word of what he had planned.

III

ENGLISH papers were waiting for them when they at last arrived back in cantonments.

Telford came into the Sergeants' Mess one hot evening and found Henderson reading a newspaper, his elbows on the table.

"There's mighty little that they don't put in their papers these days," he said. "Telegraphed it, too."

"What's it now?" asked Telford.

"An' nothin' but the truth, o' course. Here, take an' read how the r'ar guard held off an arrmy corps of Mohmands, an' how Lieutenant Kinard died at the head of his men."

Telford held out his hand for the paper and read the paragraph marked in blue pencil.

Further particulars of the death of Lieutenant R. G. Kinard, of the Second Battalion, Royal South Irish Fusiliers—known throughout the British Army as the Tipperary Tigers—have been received here.

A party of the Regiment, detailed to act as rear guard during a retirement after a reconnaissance, was caught in a *nullah*—that is, a deep defile—while making its way back to camp. The Mohmands were in force on the tops of the cliffs and inflicted severe punishment on the troops.

For a few moments there were signs of panic, as even the most seasoned of soldiers can lose their heads in a sudden crisis; but Lieutenant Kinard, whose first campaign this was, rallied his men with the utmost bravery. They retired in good order, carrying their dead and wounded with them, until further retirement was impossible and they prepared to sell their lives dearly.

And then, when the fire of the enemy had slackened and it seemed as if the worst of the attack had been driven off, there came a sudden rush of fanatical Ghazis from the rear.

The South Irish faced about and beat off the charge with the bayonet, the favorite weapon of the Tipperary Tigers from the days of Wellington. It was this that led to the crowning disaster. Lieutenant Kinard, taking with him two or three of his men, all that could be spared, pursued the flying Ghazis down the *nullah*.

At a point where the *nullah* forked the remnants of the Ghazis turned to the right. Here they were joined by fresh reënforcements. What followed, alas! is only too clear. Surrounded, outnumbered, but unconquered, the Irishmen fought as only the Irish can. There was no hope for Lieutenant Kinard and his small party. They died to a man, selling their lives dearly, as the ring of corpses showed.

A gloom has been cast over the whole Regiment by the death of this brave young officer. He was extremely popular, both with his brother officers and his men, and his loss is deeply regretted. He sacrificed his life to save what was left of the rear guard, and his sacrifice was not in vain. Had he not made his way down the *nullah*, his small command would have been taken in the rear and massacred to a man.

All the troops sent up the Khaibar will be back tomorrow, though two mountain guns remain at Landi Kotal. This sudden return from the Khaibar is doubtless due to . . .

Telford ran his eye down the column.

Lieutenant Reginald Graham Kinard, who was killed in the rear-guard action on Tuesday, joined the Royal South Irish Fusiliers from the R. M. C., Sandhurst, as a second lieutenant, six years ago and was promoted lieutenant in February, 1906. He is the only son of Major-General R. C. R. Kinard, V. C., C. B., of Knockbolton House, Knockbolton, County Kildare, Ireland.

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Major-General Kinard won his Cross in Afghanistan in 1879 for gallantly rescuing one of his wounded in the face of overwhelming odds. His son, in dying for the sake of those whom he commanded, was only following out the high traditions of his family and his Regiment. Though one may regret the loss of such a gallant young officer, it is impossible not to feel a thrill of pride at the way in which he died. It is a lesson that will not be lost in these days of self-seeking materialism.

So Lieutenant Kinard by his death proved that the old spirit of the South Irish still lives—the spirit of Coruna, of Badajoz, of Albuera, of Barrosa, of Niagara, of Waterloo and of Inkerman: in all of which battles the old Tipperary Tigers won undying fame. Thus the tradition runs from generation to generation. The twentieth century still has its heroes, even as the nineteenth.

It is curious to note that at the battle of Fontenoy in the year of the '45 what was virtually a British victory was turned into a reverse by the furious onslaught of Marshal Saxe's Irish Brigade, the famous Wild Geese, with whom fell a Captain Patrick Kinard, an ancestor of the brave young officer who was killed on the northwest frontier of India last Tuesday.

Color-Sergeant Telford stood up and stared at Henderson.

"Well?" he said.

"You've read it?" asked Henderson. "Remarkable, was it not, how they have got the full details of that fight? Very remarkable!"

"An' what of that?" said Telford. "'Tis thrue, Hendherson, as far as anny newspaper report can be thrue. That's how we found him an' Pierce an' Flanagan. Ask Danny Keane if we didn't."

"With their wounds in the back. Well, we'll not argue, Telford. It's all wan to me; but I always said an' I always will say that you fellas should not be blamed for lettin' Misther Kinard an' the other two go helther-skelther to their deaths. Ye couldn't sthop thim chasin' Pathans if there was no Pathans for thim to chase, could ye?"

Telford nodded, and walked out on to the parade ground.

As he strolled slowly toward the artillery lines a voice spoke his name and a man came running after him.

"Color-Sargint, might I spake to ye for a minute?"

Telford halted by the low wall of a compound.

"Who is it?"

"It's me, Hartigan. An' there's Keelan here too; an' Corp'ral McGinnis, an' O'Toole. We've been talkin'."

"Oh, it's you, Hartigan, is it? I wanted to see you."

"Maybe it's the same as I'm wantin' to see you about, Sargint."

"It 'ull be as well, maybe, if ye fitch the others."

"Neligan will be here dhirectly. O'Brien an' Sims are on guard; an' that's all that's lift of us, save only Murphy an' Jack O'Hara that are sthill in hospital."

"Ye read that piece in the paper, did ye not?" said Keelan. "His father, Major-Gin'ral Kinard, is proud of his son this minute. 'The owld thraditions,' did ye see that? To leg it away from yer wounded, an'——"

"Listen," said Telford, keeping his eyes fixed on the lights of the open windows shining in the blue darkness. "There isn't a man in the Reg'mint, only us, knows what happened in the *nullah* that day. Danny Keane is afther gittin' that piece in the newspaper. That makes it aisier. There's wan man who should be towld the thruth."

"An' that?" said Hartigan coolly.

"His father."

There was a low laugh.

"By the curse of Cromwell!" said Hartigan; "that's a dale betther than what I was after plannin'. Be cripes, that's great! He had no pity on us; now we shall have no pity on him."

"Will ye write, Sargint?" asked McGinnis.

"That I lave to you," said Telford. "We can write at wance, or we can wait till it's another family thradition; an' thin whin the Batthalion is home ag'in, we can tell him ourselves with our own lips."

"But, Sargint," said Hartigan, "which of us will be sthayin' on to jine the First Batthalion whin it comes out in the Autumn? I'm due home, for wan. Danny Keane is goin', so I go. Keelan here, he goes, too. O'Toole, your sivin* is up in the Spring, is it not? The same with O'Brien an' Neligan. You rethire nixt Summer, do ye not, Mike? That laves how many? McGinnis, how about you?"

"I'm goin', of course. If there's to be anny reck'nin' with Major-Gin'ral Kinard—divil take him!—thin I'll be there if I have to be invalided home with dysenth'ry. I'm a corp'ral now, an' I'll reingage for another five years."

"That laves only Jackie O'Hara an' Murphy. Unliss, maybe, they're sint home to Netley. Sims sthays on here, of course."

"Well," said Telford, "thin we'll wait. You undhersthand now, don't ye? The

*Seven-years' term of enlistment.

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first thing that we do whin we git our furlough is to visit Knockbolton. That will not be out of the way for three of us, at laste. An' we'll tell Major-Gin'ral Kinard how his son died in savin' the lives of his wounded; how he fought to the lasht an' was killed with his back to the inimy—what was it?—carryin' on the best thraditions of the Reg'mint!

"An' not wan worrd of this, now; not wan breath till the day whin we're in Knockbolton House facin' him. An', Mother of God! That day will be worth livin' for! There's wan man that will be made to suffer for what he's done to others.

"Had he mercy or pity on my mother? She died whin my father was in Kilmainham. O'Grady, had he anny raison to show pity, afther what he done to him an' his? Hartigan here, did he give him a chanst or not?

"Pierce—Pierce is dead, but he could tell ye the same. An' O'Hara, too. Where is O'Hara's home now? Scatthered. In America somewhere or other. An' Pierce's as well. In New York, across the Atlantic.

"Irelan' has no room for the likes of us an' the likes of Major-Gin'ral Kinard, for all his wealth an' family an' acres. As long as his family is prosperous, what does *he* care what happens to us? An' maybe he'll sthill howld up his head whin he larns how his son killed sivin men of his own Reg'mint."

McGinnis cleared his throat.

"Color-Sargint!" he said. "Did ye year what they're afther sayin' in the Reg'mint? That it was sartain death for Misther Kinard to have gone in pursuit of the Ghazis, an' that it was the duty of you an' the other owld soldhiers to have sthopped him! Are we to listen to that kind of talk an' say nothin'?"

"Yis, McGinnis," said Telford, "we are. We have promised Danny Keane. It's harrd, of course; but we must tell no wan but Major-Gin'ral Kinard himself."

The notes of the *First Post* rang out clearly in the stillness of the night.

"Time to be gittin' in," said Hartigan. "That's good news that you're afther givin' us, Sargint."

"Will it make up for O'Grady an' Pierce an' Devlin an' the other boys?" said Telford.

ONE scorching, stagnant afternoon, Telford stood before Captain Keane in the wide veranda of the officer's bungalow.

"Ye sint for me, sir?"

"Yes, Telford. There's something I want to talk to you about."

Telford, puzzled by his manner, eyed him curiously. Had anything happened? He searched his mind. There was no trouble in the Company; of that he was positive.

He waited patiently.

"I've a letter from Major-General Kinard."

"Yis, sir," said Telford.

"He wishes me to thank the men who were with his son that day in the *nullah*, and who brought his body back to camp. He's very grateful."

Telford's face hardened. Grateful, was he? What the devil did he think they would do? Leave their dead to be cut up by the Pathans?

Captain Keane went on in a quick, uneasy tone.

"He—er—also sends a—a small check—to be divided among those who came out alive. Let me see, now; how many are there? There's the check, Telford; it's for forty pounds."

"Indeed, sir!" said Telford. "That's very good of him."

"Shall I get it cashed or will you?"

"Nayther me nor you, thank ye, sir. Will ye sind it back at wance, with our complimints?" He swallowed a lump in his throat. "Ye might tell him, sir, that we want none of his money. We only did what we would have done for any wan. We want no pay for that, sir, thank ye."

"But, Telford, you can't give it back." Captain Keane pursed up his lips and frowned. "It's not that at all; it's a gift. To buy yourselves some little memento of his son. He says so in his letter."

"Can we not, sir? I think that we can. We'd be obliged if ye'd write to him an' say that we will not touch wan pinny of his money."

The officer nodded.

"Ye-es; but, Telford, couldn't you let the money go to some charity and pretend that you've taken it? There's no need to hurt the old gentleman's feelings. After all, he commanded the South Irish once upon a time, and he was proud of his son."

"Sir," said Telford thickly, "that forty poun's must go back to where it come from. Does he think that we would lave our dead out there at the mercy of the Pathans? Does he not know that we do not do that sort

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of thing in the Arrmy?"

"You'd better let the others see it," said the officer. "If they want it sent back, I'll do as you say."

Telford saluted and left the veranda, a dull anger surging through his heart.

He found Hartigan lying on his cot in his barrack room smoking; Keelan sat at the table reading; O'Brien was cleaning his rifle.

Telford stared at them from the doorway.

"Listen, bhoys," he said. "Gin'ral Kinard has had the bleeding impertinence to sind us forty poun's for havin' brought his son's body back to be buried."

"Forty poun's!" said Hartigan. "What the blazes does he be doin' that for?"

"What have ye done with it?" asked Keelan.

"What do ye think? I'm afther tellin' Danny Keane that we'll sind it back where it came from. But he towld me to ax yez first."

"But why?" asked O'Brien from the other side of the room. "Why will ye sind it back? Money's money, whoiver it comes from. Hasn't he plinty to spare?"

Hartigan groped under his cot and hurled a boot at his head.

"Ye mis'rable little Belfast dock-rat! Kape such things to yerself! Could we be takin' his money an' thin tell him his son was what he was? If I get to come over to ye I'll take the skin off yer back with me belt buckle."

O'Brien subsided, muttering vain threats.

"There isn't another man who'd have said that, only you, O'Brien. An' that in the spite of a thirst on me that I wouldn't quinch with six months' pay in me pocket. If ye fill yer belly with food, an' dhrink yer fill, you're satisfied. Maybe ye'll l'arn bether some day, but I doubt it. Ye rotten little worrm! Take his money, would ye? Tear it up, Sargint, an' have done with it!"

"No," said Keelan, "sind it back so's he'll see we've no use for it. What kind of a man is owld Kinard at all? He sinds us money—for doin' our duty; for savin' that son's carcass from the vultures! We're only common soldhiers, we are, to be paid in money.

" 'That's for you,' he says. 'That's all yez undhersthand. Buy beer with it, an' git dhrunk. Ye brought me son's body into camp, an' ye musht be rewarded. Git dhrunk thin an' be happy!' Rot his sowl, he'll pay for that!"

"He's a mane man, too, is owld Kinard, as a gin'ral rule," said Hartigan.

ONCE more Telford stood in the veranda with the check in his hand.

"Well?" said Captain Keane.

"We'd be obliged to ye, sir, if ye'd sind it back ag'in where it belongs. They'll not touch it, sir."

"Very well, Telford. I can't blame you. It's hard on the General, though."

"It was a dale hardher on thim that losht their lives in the *nullah*, sir."

IV

THE long, hot Summer dragged on from week to week; an eternity of never-ending sameness.

Each evening Color-Sergeant Telford crossed out another day on the calendar hanging in his bunk. And although the time was drawing nigh when the Battalion would leave for home, yet he was tormented by the fear that something might happen to him—fever, or sunstroke; and that after all he might never live to tell Major-General Kinard how his son had deserted his men under fire and died with his back to the enemy.

Telford spoke of his fears to Hartigan.

"Supposin'," he said, "that annything were to happen to anny of us that's lift! Supposin' that I, for instance, should niver see Irelan' ag'in! Would ye do what we have promised to do?"

"I would. All of us would. I have sworn the boys by iv'ry oath that a man howlts sacred not to rist till they have towld the father how the son died. An' they will. An' I'm afther takin' the oath meself. But nothin' will happen now. We'll be there, each wan of us."

It was a few days after this that O'Hara came back to duty.

"Are ye recovered, Jack?" said Telford, meeting him after early morning parade.

"Betther than I've iver been. Look at me! Fit to fight for me life! Whin are they goin' to sind us out afther Pathans ag'in, Color-Sargint?" He laughed happily. "There'll be football comin' on soon, of course; but I'd rather it was campaignin' ag'inst Pathans, all the same."

"Ye musht be careful of yerself, O'Hara."

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"Sure I'll be careful. They've given me me sthripe; see!" He held out his arm. "That's for bein' cut up by thim Ghazis, eh? An' why? 'Tis a pleasure to be fightin' em."

"Ye're feelin' sthrong ag'in, are ye?"

"I am. Nothin' will iver happen to me now, not till me sivin's up."

Four days later he was in hospital once more.

"What's this they're sayin' about O'Hara?" said Telford, who had just come off guard duty.

"Fainted lasht night at tattoo," said Hartigan. "An' he's bad. I dunno' what in the worrl' was the matther with him—seemed to go wake all of a sudden."

"'Tis the sun," said Keelan. "Out in it yestiday, whin he should have been indoors."

And that forenoon an orderly in the R. A. M. C. arrived at the Sergeants' Mess with a message for Telford.

"Color-Sergeant, there's a young feller in horspital wot wants to see yer. 'E asked me to come over an' tell yer that 'e'd be obliged to yer if yer could."

Telford snatched up his helmet and ran out into the blinding heat.

"Is he worse?"

"Well, you know 'ow it is out 'ere in this blighted climate. Anything's bad. That's why——"

But Telford, without waiting to hear the rest, was hurrying toward the hospital at the far end of the artillery lines.

They led him into the ward, and he stood by O'Hara's bedside.

"What is it, Jack?" he asked softly. "Ye mustn't tire yerself."

"Sargint," he whispered, "I thought I'd like to spake to ye." His hands plucked feebly at the sheet, and his eyes met Telford's with a curious expression, half doubtful, half frightened. "I want to spake to ye so that no wan ilse will hear, only you."

"It 'ull kape till you're betther, Jack."

"There's no kapin' anny more for me. I can feel it. I'm goin' pretty quick. Color-Sargint, ye rimimber that day whin they caught us in the *nullah?*"

"Will I iver forgit it? The way that ye got yerself hurt!"

"Ye said that I fought well, did ye not?"

"I did so," said Telford. "None betther. I say it now."

The boy's lips twisted into a slight smile.

"I've heard thim talkin' about how Misther Kinard wint off an' lift us—Hartigan an' the rist of thim. Well, Sargint, leshen to me! I was as bad as him. I could scarce howlt me rifle, I was that scairt. Whin they come for us, the Ghazis, I filt mesilf givin' way. I just had to run at thim, or I'd have tuk to me heels like that young orficer did."

His voice was so low that Telford had to lean forward to catch what he was saying.

"That's all. The South Irish Fusiliers do not run as a gin'ral rule, but I was near to runnin' thin. Whin I heard thim talkin' I knew that I was as bad. It was no courage that made me go forward, Sargint; I was too scairt to do annything ilse. Ye don't think that I'm too much of a coward, do ye? I lied that time I said that I wanted to be fightin' ag'in."

Telford was breathing very quickly.

"Mother of God! An' what's that ye're sayin', O'Hara? A coward! Man, ye're as brave as anny wan in the Reg'mint!"

"That's all," said the boy faintly. "I—I only wanted ye not to think—not to be too hard on—on Misther Kinard. I was near to runnin' mesilf."

He closed his eyes and lay very still.

Through the open window there floated the sound of a distant bugle-call.

Telford waited patiently, his thoughts far away from the small hospital. After a while something in the boy's thin face startled him.

"Jack!" he whispered. "Jack, what is it?"

And then he knew. He stood up very slowly and wearily and turned away from the bed. At the door some one spoke to him; and he answered without knowing what he said, and passed out of the quiet ward.

That same evening Color-Sergeant Telford marched behind a gun-carriage on which was a coffin draped with the Union Jack, and a helmet, a bayonet and belt. And once more he heard the dreary rumble of the gun-wheels and the scrunch of heavy boots on the gravel and the murmur of the drums and the sob of the band in Chopin's "Funeral March."

They were only burying a Lance Corporal of a Line Regiment; yet as they made their way through the lines to the small cemetery the guards turned out and presented arms, and not even the Commander-in-Chief

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himself could have received a higher honor than this.

"How manny times have I heard it?" said Telford after they had returned to barracks.

"Heard what?" asked Henderson.

"The 'Rest on yer arms reversed!' an' 'With blank, three volleys in the air!' an' the *Last Post*. Well, thank God! I'll be shut of the Arrmy before long. It's all comin' an' goin'. The besht are taken, an' the worrst——"

He shrugged his shoulders and walked across the parade-ground to his own quarters.

Late that night he sat on a low wall, smoking and pondering on matters too deep for his understanding.

Two figures staggered by, arm in arm.

"Dhrunk!" said he to himself. He peered at them in the darkness and then recognized the voices of Hartigan and Keelan.

"A gug-good little fella he was. That mum-makes another."

"An' how mum-manny more of us are to be tut-taken before we rache home? Thash nun-nine of us that that cuc-coward has killed. It wash from his wounds that O'Hara died."

"Dud-do ye rimimber the—the way he wint for thim Gug-Ghazis——"

Private Hartigan stumbled and fell forward on to his hands and knees. Keelan looked at him, laughing foolishly. And then Color-Sergeant Telford did what he had no right to do. He arose from the wall and helped Hartigan to his feet.

"Bad scran to ye! Do ye want to be seen by iv'ry wan in cantonmints? Howlt yerself stheady now—come on! Quiet, you Keelan!" And he steered them skilfully toward their own hut. Which was not what he ought to have done, he knew.

A MONTH after O'Hara's funeral the Second Battalion of the Royal South Irish Fusiliers, the first of the season's home-going regiments, embarked at Bombay for Kingstown, leaving behind some four hundred men, young soldiers, to be turned over to the First Battalion due from Southampton in a week's time.

As the big transport cast off her moorings and put out to sea with the men cheering and the band playing "Rolling Home" Color-Sergeant Telford leaned on the rail and gazed shoreward in grim silence. He listened to the snatches of talk from those near him and smiled. They were all of them glad to be on their way home, of course; that was reasonable enough. Yet he felt somehow that not one man in the Regiment was half as glad as he was, for all their cheering.

"In four weeks from now, or five maybe," he muttered, "I'll be the happiest man in Irelan'."

The voyage seemed never-ending; what was at Bombay merely a matter of days became at Suez an eternity. He could scarcely believe it possible that they would ever reach the Rock. And even when they had passed through the Straits and were rolling in the sullen ground-swell of the North Atlantic, he was filled with a dull terror that the ship might never reach Kingstown.

"It won't be long now," said Hartigan, one cold gray evening.

"There's time enough yit for things to happen," said Telford.

"What things?"

"Maybe the ship 'ull sink or run ashore on the rocks."

"Small fear o' that," said Hartigan.

"Maybe I'll die." Telford frowned at the green seas sweeping toward them. "I wondher if I could rist aisy in me grave if I did. But ye will do as ye said, Hartigan, will ye not?"

"Have I forgotten Jack O'Hara? Or Devlin? Or Pat Flanagan? Would life be worth livin' if we did not let that owld divil know what we think of him an' his son? Begor! It's a quare crowd that we'd be! But ye've no cause to be worryin' at all."

"I can not but think that his luck will be too much for us. Has annything iver gone wrong with him or his? No.

"His son is dead, an' who knows how he died but us here—you an' me, McGinnis, O'Brien, Keelan, Neligan an' O'Toole, an' Murphy an' Sims back in India, an' Danny Keane, who would not spake wan worrd, not if the divil himsilf commanded him to? I'll wait till I'm walkin' up from the sthation at Knockbolton before I rid mesilf of the fear that Major-Gin'ral Kinard may niver hear how his name has been dhragged through the dhirt, an' that we are betther men than his son who killed nine of us."

Hartigan shivered and turned up the collar of his great-coat.

"It's bitther cowld in this wind afther India. It was eight that he killed, Sargint. Andherson was shot in camp, if ye rimimber.

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But ye're worryin' without raison. In three days we will be in Dublin. . . .

"Mother of God! how manny weary years is it since I seen it. An' we will git our furlough in how long? As quick as they can clear us out of barracks! An' thin the sivin of us will be payin' a visit to Major-Gin'ral Kinard in his own house. A matther of a few days, an' all our waitin' will be at an ind."

V

AND, as Private Hartigan had said, one fine afternoon in November, Color-Sergeant Telford stood on the platform of the small railway station at Knockbolton, looking about him as one who had stepped back into the dim and forgotten past.

"'Tis the same as iver," he said. "Nothin' has changed. Do ye see the owld church beyant there?"

"Ah!" said Hartigan. "An' for the love of God, look! Is not that Father Reilly himself yonda talkin' to the butcher?"

"Do ye know who he is, the butcher?" said Telford suddenly. "He's the brother of Pierce's mother. He brought the lad up."

Keelan whistled under his breath.

"Howly Biddy! An' have ye forgotten? It's there that Jack O'Hara lived. By the blacksmith's just past the inn. An' his mother—is she sthill there, I wondher?"

A thin, red-headed, spectacled man approached from the other end of the platform.

"I'll take yer tackets, if yer plaze." He peered at Telford's shoulder-strap. "Ye're in the South Irish, I see. That's the Reg'mint that the Gin'ral's son belonged to. A brave young gintleman!"

"Ye're new here, are ye not?" asked Telford.

"Tom Dickson's been dead this twelve months, an' I'm afther takin' his place. We all read how the Gin'ral's son was killed. The papers from London was full of it."

O'Brien, his face a deep crimson and, his eyes glazed and staring, lurched forward.

"Ho! They were, were they? Well, thin, Misther Stathion-masther, lit me tell ye——"

Hartigan grabbed him by the arm. "Ye dhrunken fool, sthand sthill!" He shook him fiercely. "Stop it, or we'll l'ave ye behind."

"Lit's be movin' up to the house at wance," said Telford.

"Is it the Gin'ral's that ye're goin' to?" asked the station-master.

"It is," said Telford shortly. "He's at home, is he not?"

"I belaive so. Maybe ye knew the young gintleman?"

"Maybe we did."

"Ye don't say!" said the station-master, gazing at the soldiers with his eyes wide open. "Were ye with him whin he was killed?"

But Telford had turned and was making his way out of the small white gate that led to the village street.

"Come on," he said. "Lit's git it over, quick."

O'Brien stopped him.

"Color-Sergeant, could we not have a glass of beer first? I've a thirst on me that ye could not quinch with——"

"The divil blisther ye, O'Brien! Not wan dhrop will ye have till we have done what we're afther comin' to do! Ye've been dhrinkin' all mornin', an' ye're dhrunk now."

"Dhrunk!" said O'Brien indignantly. "I'm no more dhrunk than anny man here."

"If ye say another worrd, we'll throw ye into the pond. I was ag'inst bringin' ye with us from the sthart. Shake yersilf together, man, an' thry an' look like a soldhier even if ye're not wan. Neligan, see that he kapes that ugly mouth of his closed; an' fitch him a clip on the jaw if he talks."

They walked away from the village down the highroad with high hedges on either side until they came to a stone wall topped with broken glass, and a pair of huge iron gates, and a small lodge under the trees.

TELFORD halted and, facing the six men, eyed them carefully, from the tops of their peaked forage caps to the toes of their ammunition boots.

"Pull down that belt o' yours a thrifle, Keelan. You, Neligan, put yer cap straight. O'Toole, fasten yer stock. An' O'Brien, for God's sake, button up yer tu[illegible] bricklayer that ye are, ye drunk[illegible]

He took a step backward.

"Well, maybe that will do. [illegible] gloves on, Hartigan, an' hide thi[illegible] yours. All of yez put yer gloves [illegible] betther. Are ye ready?"

As they tramped up the aven[illegible]

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the house between green meadows and tall elms from which the brown leaves dropped gently to the ground, Hartigan gave a little laugh.

"Sargint, do ye rimimber that mornin' whin we did be waitin' by the sthone wall, us an' the Sweeps, before the bugles gave us the worrd that we could sthand up an' be killed by the Boers? That's how I'm feelin' now."

"I'd as soon it was over mesilf," said Telford. "But if Major-Gin'ral Kinard knew what was comin', he'd be worse than what you are by a — sight."

"I declare I could almost pity him," said McGinnis. "Man, it will break his heart!"

"We mane it to," said Telford. "If it kills him dead at our feet, I'll no more than feel that we've done our duty. What mercy did he show my mother?"

"Would we have been brought all this way if we were not to tell him of that coward son of his?" asked Keelan.

"An' may my tongue be sthruck dumb," said Telford, "if I do not humble that man's pride this day!"

The house was a long, low building of gray stone with narrow windows and green shutters, and a flight of steps and two tall pillars at the front door. On the right were stables and coach-houses, on the left greenhouses and flower-beds overgrown with weeds, and a big, ill-kept lawn and more trees.

Telford caught his breath.

"Nothin' different. Not a blissed thing! But they do be neglectin' it shamefully."

"Shall we go 'roun' to the back door?" asked Hartigan.

"No! We're visitors to the fam'ly, makin' an afthernoon call," said Telford.

He rang the bell and listened to its clanging in some far-off part of the house. A feeling of dull fear gripped him, and he pressed his lips tightly together. O'Brien gave a nervous giggle and he glared at him. And then at the sound of quick footsteps in the hall he squared his shoulders, touched his belt and sash, and flicked his leg with [illegible]-stick.

[illegible] was opened by a stout, round-
be turned from Sout[illegible] servant who stared at the red-

As the b[illegible]goggling eyes and slack jaw.

[illegible]and put c[illegible]ral Kinard at home?" asked Tel-
[illegible]and the

Color-Serg[illegible] said the man huskily.

[illegible]and gazed [illegible]ld like to have the—the pleasure of a few minutes' conversation with him, if ye plaze."

"You're from the South Irish, are ye?" said the man in an awed voice.

"We are," said Telford impatiently. "An' what of that?"

The stout man passed his hand over his chin and seemed to hesitate. Then he stepped to one side.

"Will ye come inside?"

And the seven soldiers entered the house and stood in a wide hall with a flight of stairs at one end and pictures on the paneled walls.

The stout man turned the handle of a door.

"If ye will wait in the library, I will tell the masther."

They passed into a large room furnished with leather chairs and a writing-table and lit by two windows, with a painting of an officer on horseback over the fireplace, and four engravings of battle pictures, and some old-fashioned swords and rifles above the book-shelves, on which were a couple of model field-guns and some Peninsular and Crimean shakoes and Fusilieer busbies.

The man servant still hesitated.

"Did ye—did ye see Masther Reginald—git killed?" he asked.

"We did," said Telford. "Now will ye be off, an' say that we're afther comin' a long distance to give a message?"

The stout man went out on tiptoes. It was very quiet in the library; Telford examined the painting over the fireplace and wondered who it was, and what was the uniform, and why——

In the hall he heard the dull murmur of voices.

Some one was walking slowly toward the door, and the moment for which he had prayed for so many weary months was at hand.

He swallowed with an effort, and his teeth closed down on his lower lip. He heard the breathing of the men behind him and again O'Brien's soft, nervous laugh.

A thin, straight-backed man with a red face and a drooping gray mustache entered the room.

"Ah!" said he. "South Irish Fusiliers. You—er—want to—er—see me. I'm General Kinard."

"Yis, sir," said Telford grimly. "We know that. We're just home from India, an' we thought we'd be payin' ye a visit."

The color left the General's face.

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"My son's Regiment, of course."

"His Company," said Telford; and to give him courage there came to his mind the memory of O'Hara, and Pierce, and Flanagan, and Devlin, and the rest. "All that is lift of the r'ar guard, sir, in the fight at—the Tiger's *Nullah*, they called it afther what tuk place there."

He licked his dry lips and stared boldly into the stern eyes of the man whom he hated more than any man had ever before hated another.

"A good fight," said the General, rubbing his nose. "I read of it. A good little fight. I was in Afghanistan myself thirty years ago. You—you were with my—my son, were you? Would you mind telling me, if it's not asking too much, how—how he met his death?"

Telford took a step forward.

"Sir," he said, "we have come for that very purpose: to tell you everything."

He paused and listened.

THERE were more footsteps in the hall. The General turned quickly, but the door opened and a sad-faced little lady in black came in, followed by a tall, fair girl in gray.

"David," she said, "I had to. Matthews told me they were from the Regiment." She looked at Telford. "Color-Sergeant, you were with my son when he died. I'm glad you're here." She put out her hand and steadied herself against the back of a chair.

"You shouldn't," said the General under his breath. "You shouldn't have come down, dear. It will only——"

The tall girl stood with her back against one of the book-shelves, watching the soldiers with a strange, scornful expression.

Telford glanced from one to the other with a feeling of cold horror. He shivered as if some icy hand had clutched at his heart.

"It was good of you to have thought of us," the little lady in black was saying. "I was hoping that I might be able to meet some of the men of my boy's Regiment. You'll tell us everything, won't you?" She laid her hand on Telford's arm. "You'll tell how it all happened, please!"

Telford found his voice.

"We—we didn't mane, marm, for you to be here. It was the Gin'ral that we came to spake to. There's—there's things that, maybe, ye would not care to listen to."

He broke off, groping for the words that would spare her the pain of hearing what he must say. She had no right to be in the room at all. Why couldn't she understand what was coming? It was cruel, bitter cruel on her. And on all of them.

"Color-Sergeant," she said softly, "it will make it easier for me to bear if you tell me. I'm not afraid. You should remember that I am the wife of a soldier and the daughter of a soldier. My son died as I taught him to die, we know. The Colonel wrote. So did his Captain—Captain Keane; and the papers said so, too. But there is so much that we want to hear! You were with him when he died, were you not?"

A deep resentment against Fate surged through him. It was not right that a mother should hear of her son's shame. It would break her heart.

"With him when he was killed?" he said. "No, marm, we were not."

Hartigan tugged at his tunic and whispered; he turned and scowled.

"Will ye kape quiet!"

He faced the mother once more.

"We were not with Misther Kinard whin he was killed, marm. He had lift us—an' —an' three others. He lift us with the dead an' the wounded in the *nullah*, where we had fought, while he—he——"

His eyes rested on the tall girl by the book-shelf. She stared at him with a smile that seemed to mock him and dare him to do his worst.

A lump rose to his throat and he looked once more at the sad-faced little lady in black, who was going to hear how her son had abandoned his wounded men and fled to save his own skin.

"We were rethirin' down a *nullah*, an' the Mohmands were firin' at us from the cliffs, an' we losin' heavily. An' Misther Kinard —he——"

"He rallied you, did he not? So they said. And you retreated, carrying your dead and wounded—you'd do that, I know. Not even the dead are safe out there, poor things! And then they attacked you from the rear, the Ghazis; and poor Reggie——"

The tears were streaming down her pale cheeks, but she smiled bravely though her lips quivered.

"Oh, God!" muttered Telford. And he saw once again the *nullah* and the blue sky and the khaki figures stretched on the ground, and heard the crack of the rifles

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and the voice of the officer saying that they must retire. Maybe it would kill her! Why should he care?

Something seemed to be choking him: his mouth was dry and . . .

"He fought well, did he not?" she was saying.

"Fought well!" said Private Hartigan. "Fought—— O murdher!"

The clock on the mantelpiece whirred hoarsely and struck four silvery strokes.

And then Color-Sergeant Telford, remembering his oath and the eight men dead, killed by a coward, broke in fiercely:

"Do ye want to know? Thin ye will, iv'rything. Your son died, an' we—we found his body an' brought him back to camp—him an' the others. We sint back the money; there was none needed. We did what we would have done for the m'anest man in the Batthalion. We were fightin' behind rocks an' stones; we could rethire no further, for we had our dead an' our wounded with us, an' the hills was thick with the inimy.

"An' thin, whin I was wondherin' how in the worrld we would anny of us git out alive, the firin' died down an' I heard some wan shout that they were comin' at us from the r'ar. An' it was thrue. The Ghazis were chargin' us up the *nullah*.

"An' Misther Kinard, he jumped to his feet. 'Come on!' says he. 'We'll bate thim at their own game. We'll show thim that the—the South Irish can die same as the Ghazis.' Yis, he says thim very worrds. Thin he ran forward, laughin' like he was happy, he an' three others. It was the safest thing he could do. An' we watched thim.

"They met the Ghazis with the bay'nit. I do not rimimber now if there was wan single shot fired or not. But the Ghazis gave way an' bruk, with Misther Kinard an' the three others at their heels. I shouted for him to come back, but it was no use. We had to wait with the wounded, an' could do nothin'. They dhrove what was lift of thim down the *nullah*, an' that was the lasht we saw of Misther Kinard alive."

Telford stopped. The pounding of his heart was like the distant thudding of field-guns; the sweat rolled down his face. The mother was crying quietly; the General stared into the fire, with his elbow on the mantelpiece; and the tall girl, no longer smiling, twisted her fingers in her handkerchief, and frowned as if puzzled.

"Later on some of our fellas came up undher Captain Keane, an' we wint in search of Misther Kinard. The *nullah* divided into two an' he had turned to the right afther the Ghazis. We followed the thracks——"

"Followed the thracks," said Hartigan. "For Hiven's sake, git on!"

"An' around a corner we found him. Him an' the three privates, an' no liss—no liss than nine—no, ten Pathans, each wan of thim dead. An' God knows how manny they had wounded before they were killed.

"It was reënforcemints that they had run into, an' but for Misther Kinard an' the other three we would have been killed, all of us. That was the way of it; he died to save us—the greathest thing I iver heard tell of.

"We tuk thim back to camp an' buried thim that same night. An' we said thin that if we got out of the campaign alive that—we would do our besht to come to Knockbolton an' tell how it happened. That is why we are here today."

He paused and took a deep breath.

"An' that is all," he said. "Iv'rything."

Then he gave a low laugh. The story that he had come so many miles to tell was told. He had done what he had said; he had kept his oath.

"Thank you for telling me," said the mother in a faint whisper. "I'm glad—glad that he died that way. I knew that he had, but it's nice to hear it from those whom he died to save."

She drew herself up and a proud little smile drove away the tears.

"It's worth while to be the mother of such a son." She held out her small hand and Telford grasped it timidly. "Have you a mother living, Color-Sergeant? She must be proud of you."

"No, marm," said Telford. "She's dead this manny a year."

He drew back, dazed and bewildered, as one who awakens from some dream. He remembered then that this was one of the reasons why he had wished to tell the story of the fight in the *nullah*. They had killed his mother between them, and in return he had saved their son.

"We must be goin' now," he said.

The General came forward.

"I thank you for coming," he said in his

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deep, rasping voice. "I knew that my son would die like a man, when his time came. That was the first lesson he learned. You have helped me to bear the greatest sorrow of my life, and I thank you."

"You must have something to eat and drink before you go," said the mother.

"Thank ye kindly, marm," said Telford, "but we have a thrain to catch. We must be goin' this minute."

As the soldiers filed out of the big library the little lady in black shook hands with each of them.

"You've made me very happy," she said to Telford. "Won't you tell me your name? Telford, is it? Thank you. I'm going to send you a picture of my son in his first uniform. To remember him by."

Telford passed out, his brain in a whirl. The General was standing at the front door.

"Ah! Good-by, Color-Sergeant," he said. "You're certain there's nothing that I can do for you or your men?"

"Nothin', thank ye, sir," said Telford; and he hurried down the steps.

NOT a word was spoken as they walked along the drive under the elms. At the lodge gates the tall girl in gray was waiting. "May I speak to you for a moment, Color-Sergeant?"

He followed her to one side.

"You told a lie, didn't you?" she said, facing him with the same mocking smile. "Of course it was a lie, from beginning to end."

"A lie!" said Telford weakly.

"Yes, man, a lie. My brother never did what you said he did. It wasn't in him to do. Do you think I don't know him better than that?" She looked at him contemptuously. "Tell me what happened really! There's nothing to be afraid of."

"I don't understhand," said Telford, glancing at the scarlet and blue of the soldiers at the gate. "Misther Kinard died as I said he died; in the *nullah*. They killed him, the Pathans did."

The girl made an impatient little gesture.

"And what was he doing so far from the rest of you? From the wounded?"

Telford stared at her with sullen anger.

"I have spoken the thruth. He followed afther the Ghazis—he an' three of his men. He died fightin' to save the rist of us."

The color flooded the girl's cheeks.

"You swear that you're speaking the truth, Color-Sergeant?" she demanded.

"I am. As brave a young orficer as iver walked."

"I'm glad," said the girl softly. "I couldn't believe, somehow. Reggie was different from other boys always, and it seemed impossible——" She broke off abruptly. "Good-by," she said with a haughty little nod. "I'm glad my brother was a better man than I thought him."

She turned and walked across the grass in the direction of the house. Telford joined the others in the road outside the gates.

"Come on, boys. Let's be gittin' out of here."

They made their way slowly toward the village. All at once Hartigan began to laugh. "We towld him! On my soul, but we towld him!"

Telford glanced at his brick-red face out of the corner of his eye.

"Say what ye like; I will not blame ye. I thried, I did me besht, but it was not—not in me. Whin the time came I could not say the worrds that were in me mind. I had not the courage to do it."

"Mother of God! Don't think that I'm blamin' ye. What ilse could ye have done? Sthand up in cowld blood an' tell her that she was the mother of the greathest coward that iver killed eight of his own men!"

"But, by cripes! It was quare," said McGinnis. "We have talked of this since—whin was it? June! We had planned iv'rything, what we would say an' do, but the wan thing we forgot, an' that was the mother."

"An' in three years' time," said Neligan, "they'll be tachin' all the young recruities in the South Irish the sthory of how Liftenant Kinard—blast him!—died to save the r'ar guard in Tiger's *Nullah*."

Keelan began to whistle "Garry Owen." O'Toole and Hartigan lit their pipes. O'Brien wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

"I wondher, would they have given us beer if we had sthayed as they axed us to."

Telford growled at him. "Howlt yer tongue while yer betthers are sp'akin'. You shall dhrink yer fill of beer when we rache the village. It's dhrink that I'm needin' mesilf just now, afther what we wint through. An', saints presarve us! that owld divil back yonda, Major-Gin'ral Kinard, he does be thinkin' that he is the father of a hairo. Well, let him think. We know."

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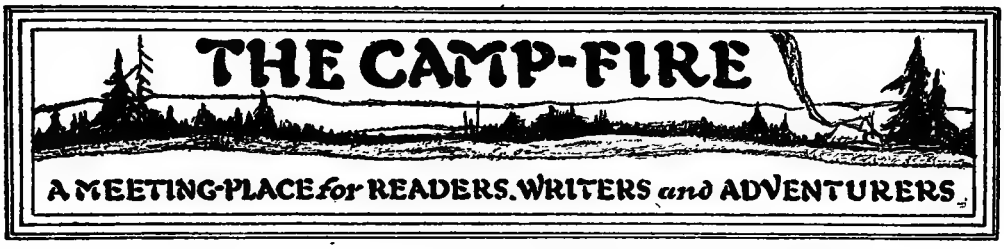

THE death of H. D. Couzens—Harry Couzens—at Phœnix, Arizona, in April, makes sad reading at our Camp-Fire. Many of you were his personal friends, all of you knew him through his stories. For the better part of a year he had made a brave fight against the White Death. Through it all I kept in touch with him, and his letters are such as a man writes. It is well to face sudden danger unflinchingly, but infinitely more creditable to fight it out day after day with an unseen, never-resting foe. Let us send our "Well fought" after him on the Long Way.

ALL of us, I think, are pleased when we find in our contents-page a story of the deep-sea fishermen by Frederick William Wallace. A recent letter from him tells me he has just returned from his annual vacation as a deep-sea fisherman—the real thing, not the amateur stunt. Have I told you that he is now the editor of the *Canadian Fisherman*, a new magazine devoted entirely to the fishing-industry of our friends and neighbors to the north?

I'm no expert on commercial fisheries, but I know a good magazine when I see it, and my hat's off to Frederick William Wallace, editor. I suppose it isn't "professional" for me to advertise another magazine, but he's a member of our Camp-Fire and his magazine is of value and interest to all, Americans and Canadians, who have to do with the field it covers. And it's far from uninteresting even to those that don't. You can get a copy by sending ten cents to the *Canadian Fisherman*, 35 St. Alexander St., Montreal.

IN A LETTER the other day, A. Judson Hanna, who has a poem in this issue and some stories and verse to come, enclosed a "Camp-Fire Acrostic" merely as a ready pen's cheerful pleasantry for my personal perusal. I persuaded him to let the Camp-Fire have it:

A—Algot Lange, a modern freebooter,
Who beats up Brazil with a pen and six-shooter.

D—Daring Duquesne—Captain Fritz—by extraction
A gentleman Boer, but a devil in action.

V—Vagabond, Valor, and also Vaux Bacon,
Whose first name is George, or I'm greatly mistaken.

E—El Dorado. We'd all like to get there;
For the wealth that it vaunts, I believe is all yet there.

N—Nds of the earth, like Nome, and Nogales,
Where great deeds are done on Nutritious tamales.

T—Is for "Tommies," and Talbot, Their scribe.
T for The Tales, Too, he Tells of Their Tribe.

U—(Now you think that our crazy acrostic
Is done for; but, friends, spare your tears and your caustic.
Since Morphy objects to the printed hiatus,
We'll have a wee drap at the fountain afflatus,
Then merrily on to the rhymes that await us).
Ah! U is for U Dhammaloka O'Rourke,
A Buddhist D. D., though a son of ould Cork.

R—Restless spirits, like Foran, McGrew,
Eke A. D. H. Smith, and the Wallaces two.

E—Is the End of adventure and daring.
If we've played the game well, who the devil is caring?

I OFTEN wish I had nothing to do except sit down and talk to the various adventurers and wanderers who drop in at the office when the winds of chance blow them to New York. Occasionally a liar calls, sometimes a boaster, now and then a dead beat, but by far the greater part of them are fine, upstanding men that I'd like to foregather with by the hour and day.

A few of them have written for the magazine, some I have had correspondence with, but many come as entire strangers. Some of these strangers come partly because there is some small thing I may be able to do for them—not charity or anything of that sort, but the kind of thing one man can do for another with little trouble and with benefit

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to both. But a large part of them come merely to pay their respects—not to me personally, for personally I mean little or nothing to them—but to the magazine that stands for adventure and has a genuine interest in the restless-footed men.

I WISH I could be free to talk for hours to all of these adventurer visitors. Generally I have to yield to the call of work piled up on my desk waiting for me reproachfully. Being an editor isn't all beer and skittles. Far from it. Too often I have to tear myself away from news of far places and strange happenings and inside information I ought to store away. Even as it is, I frequently get advance tips of interesting coming events—big ones clear across the world sometimes. And, thanks to these friends, sometimes when a liar calls I can sit and listen innocently while he hands me statements I happen to know are rather far from real facts and conditions.

OH, YES, I wish I had full time for all these interesting adventurers. There's Victor Hope, for example. Perhaps some tourist-readers have met him as licensed guide in Havana. Every now and then he stops long enough in Havana to make a stake for his real operations. I think he must be almost the most restless-footed of you all. He can not rest; movement is life itself to him. Just now he is sending postcards to me and to himself in my care from South America. He has set out, alone, to visit *all* the countries in the world in, I think, two years. He sends the postcards from nearly every place he visits and I keep them for him, so that he can produce proof of his having been in those places on a certain date. A stake of several hundred dollars will take him literally all over the world, for he is an able-bodied seaman, can turn his hand to almost anything, and has already covered most of the earth on former trips, so he knows the ropes and can handle them.

THEN there was Hayter, ex-sergeant in that splendid body of men, the Royal Canadian Northwest Mounted Police. On his way home to England, with little to say about himself but much about the deeds of others and with some interesting facts about the lost balloonist Andrée, Stefansson and his "white" Eskimos, and so on, and so on.

Harry Morgan I know only by letter and the reports of others. He is something over seven feet tall, and his life reads like a dime-novel. The Kingston, Jamaica, papers were full of him, and this Spring he sent me one with an account of his marriage there.

Then there are the "king" of Cocos Island, August Gissler; a Greek with one of the best stored minds I know, who has been close inside the Balkan situation; Captain Baragwanath, a sea-captain from the Pacific, now a member of the Adventurers' Club of New York; A. D. Temple, forty years in Mexico, once known as "Six-Shooter Bill" but a "gentleman and a scholar;" hundreds more—men who have lived and adventured in Africa, the South Sea, China, South and Central America, Australia, the Arctic Circle, everywhere.

ONE of the strangest things of all to me is the number of men I've never seen but with whom I've become friends by letter. A few of them are contributors to the magazine; some are friendly critics of it; one is a poet on an island in the sea; one, with whom particularly I hope to shake hands some day, has been a convict some half-dozen times, but is very much a man for all that; one is a boy only recently out of school, not college; one is a——But the list is a long one.

As I said in the beginning, if only my work would leave me more time to spend in their company!

WHEN Hapsburg Liebe writes of the Tennessee mountains he is literally at home. He was born and raised among them, lives among them now and, except for military service in the Philippines and some time in Japan and Hawaii, has spent most of his life as one of the mountaineers he writes about in this issue.

FULL data on the Adventurers' Club will be sent from this office on request. The Club has no connection with the "Camp-Fire" or *Adventure*, but so many inquiries come in that we have arranged to send out this information.

"'THAT'S Business!'" in this issue, brings into our circle a new writer, John Amid, who, in accordance with custom, stands up and introduces himself. Our greetings to him!

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As in the White Knight's song, there is little to relate. I am too hopelessly humdrum for any biographical notes. Utterly hopeless. I have corns and good friends. I have financial difficulties, and like my beefsteak thick and rare. I am nearly thirty, and bathe regularly. My family is much more interesting than I am. And it's the same about adventures—never have any. Though I've managed, as the poet puts it, to pull the whiskers of death more times than most, each escape has been of a most prosaic order. Once I crowded my head past the faucets and nearly drowned in the wash-basin, in a tumblerful of water.

They're all like that. Like the escape of a lady with whom I was comparing notes concerning the San Francisco earthquake. "Why," she told me, "I had the *narrowest* escape! I was standing beside a tall dresser, just *full* of clothes—right close to it! Why, if it had fallen over on me I'd have been killed." Just like that.

My last escape was at the time of the Los Angeles *Times* explosion. I had been detailed temporarily to the automobile editor's desk, and was in the habit of loafing through the early part of the week, then working right through the night Friday and until the "Pink" went to press at six Saturday evening. My desk was plumb in the middle of the editorial floor, in a little room behind the city-room, directly over the point of the explosion. The explosion came at one o'clock in the morning. My typewriter and the table under it went straight up into the air when the explosion came. But I escaped. I'd thrown up the job the week before and was asleep in the country.

But concerning fiction-incidents and characters there's always plenty to write. The original of Mrs. Middleton in "'That's Business!'" is one of my neighbors—a woman so wonderful that no dozen stories will ever do her justice. I received yesterday a check from a magazine for a love-story in which, with a few years judiciously scraped off, she figured quite youthfully. She's far more wonderful than fiction—I don't even dare attempt to draw her faithfully, for no one would believe me. She is a born gambler, but works harder than any man I ever saw.

Last Summer, during the fruit-season, she used her car as a truck and made two trips a day with a big load to the city twenty miles away—a total of over eighty miles—doing most of the loading and unloading herself. Before the first trip she came to the acres in my vicinity from her fruit-ranch—a matter of eight miles of bad roads—to milk the cows and do the other chores. And at dusk she came for the chores again. Away over a hundred miles of autoing a day, and more than a man's work besides! Her last gamble was to buy another large tract of outlying land, paying—since all her resources were already taxed—with a mortgage for the full amount. The interest comes to more than two thousand dollars a year. The water-details of the story are quite accurate, though of course in real life not connected with this particular character.

HERE, again, is the brief explanation of our identification-cards. They are offered free of charge to any of you. All we ask is that you comply carefully with the simple directions as they appear below in italics:

The cards bear this inscription, printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, U. S. A., stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. The names and addresses will be treated as confidential by us. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for purposes of business identification. Later, arrangements may perhaps be made for money deposits to cover cable or telegraph notifications. Cards furnished free of charge, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application. Send no applications without the two names and two addresses in full.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later, for the cost of manufacture, we may furnish, instead of the above cards, a card or tag of aluminum, proof against heat, water and general wear and tear, for adventurers when actually in the jungle, desert, etc.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give the two names and addresses in full when applying.*

THE REAL FATE OF BULLY HAYES

The Camp-Fire Solves a South Sea Mystery of Long Standing

[*Concluded from last month*]

NOW comes R. B. Kidd, who spent some years in the South Seas. Some of his information he got from Captain Hall in Honolulu, some (the most important) from Charles Elson of Honolulu, some from other sources and other places. Recall what Mr. Couzens said of the report that Hayes was finally stabbed to death by a sailor in revenge for abuse received years before on the lumber schooner, Hayes' first vessel. Note Elson's version, as reported by Mr. Kidd. Then compare both with Louis Becke's statement yet to come. We are getting down to bed-rock now.

Mr. Kidd opens with the following facts and reports: *Leonora* wrecked on a coral reef in Utive harbor, slow word of this reaching Honolulu in March, 1875; the report of his conversion on Strong's Island by a Protestant missionary, the Rev. G. B.

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White; Hayes falls from grace, steals a schooner at Guam, and is imprisoned there by the Spanish; he works a Catholic conversion this time and secures a transfer to the prison at Manila.

Here comes in Charles Elson's story. In the early part of 1876 Elson happened to be in Manila in the bark *Canada*, and was one of those instrumental in arranging a chance for Hayes' legal rescue by the captain of a British warship if he would change from an American to an English subject. Shortly after Hayes refused this condition, the *Canada* sailed for San Francisco.

DURING the five months they were outfitting in San Francisco Hayes took as a sort of partner a man named ————, whose wife was very pretty. The couple were to go with the vessel. "A young Dutchman named Peter, whose surname I do not recall, completed the crew."

One day in October they were ready to sail and Hayes went ashore with ———— and his wife. Six or seven hours after the time set for their return Hayes and the woman came alongside in a rowboat at midnight. The disappearance of ———— looked "fishy" to Elson, but Hayes passed over the matter lightly and he was not the man to stand cross-examination.

I knew we would never see the missing man again, whatever might have been his fate, and Hayes knew that I knew it. He passed a lot of time in the woman's company, and later I had cause to think him very much smitten with her.

A storm played havoc with their water-casks, and the straight run to Apia had to be abandoned. Honolulu and Lahaina were suggested by Elson and negatived by Hayes with a laugh and an account of certain incidents in his past that made those places unhealthy for him. Two days later they took on water at the northwestern point of the island of Hawaii. Thence to Apia.

But before we sighted any islands or even decided which port to make, signs of what developed into serious trouble made their appearance. Peter did not get along with the Captain. The sailor was surly, and seemed to think he had come aboard to do little work. He had signed on as cook, but in addition to his duties in the galley we kept him busy standing his regular watch and working just as any ordinary sailor would do. Two or three days after the storm, Hayes held the tiller. Evidently desiring to talk with the woman, he called to Peter:

"Come aft and take this tiller!"

But the sailor did not start as rapidly as Hayes was used to having his crew obey orders so the old man yelled, with an oath:

"Here, you Dutch fool! Come take this tiller!"

"Take the tiller is it? Take the tiller is it?" exclaimed the fellow very angrily. "It's nothing but work, work all the time! I'm the cook on this schooner, not the navigator!"

YOU could feel the Captain's rage. Making the tiller fast, he strode forward. Hayes stood much taller than Peter and glaring down on the sailor, he said between clenched teeth:

"Oh, you are the cook on this schooner, are you? Well! I'm the master of this vessel! Do you know that?"

"Yes, sir," responded the now frightened man.

"You lie! You don't seem to know it, and I'm going to impress the fact on you so you won't forget it again this voyage!"

I didn't see how or where Hayes hit him, but I heard the cook fall and saw him lying stunned, with the blood coming out of his mouth and nose.

"Here, Elson," ordered Hayes. "I'm going below."

I took the tiller and never saw him again till the next morning.

After that row, Hayes never showed any consideration for Peter. Indeed, I'm not so sure, as the cruise wore along, but that the Captain and the woman had some words over the rather harsh way he acted toward the sailor; for the young fellow was not half bad-looking.

AT APIA the people received Hayes like some prince come home from foreign lands. The American consul, the captain of the port, and officials generally came to greet him. . . . From Upolu we stood northwest through the Kingsmill Islands. . . . The greetings the natives gave him caused me more astonishment. Despite the fact that he was noted among them as a harsh and often cruel man, they manifested invariably the utmost delight over his appearance. . . . He showed the utmost consideration and friendliness toward me. . . . Evidently he intended to impress on the natives that I would be his special assistant in the later operations. . . . We stopped at fully a dozen islands and headed, finally, for Bonham, . . . then cleared for Ascension late in January, 1877.

"We are bound for Ascension," explained Hayes, "to restore my trading station. I plan to run back later on some important business to Strong's Island. Mr. White, the missionary at that place, is a splendid man and I feel grateful to him for the aid he gave me after my brig had been wrecked."

BUT Hayes was never to utter that speech of gratitude. As if to prophesy the pending doom of that strange and awful man, the skies grew dark and threatening soon after we dropped the land, and there began to be mutterings from the heavens that put foreboding of disaster in my heart.

Hayes moved about constantly that afternoon and night, making ready for the blow that we knew would soon strike the *Lotus*. He stood his watch, too, like the rest of us. Within a few hours the wind from the northwest had whipped up a tremendous sea. The night was black; the rain fell in heavy showers; the wind blew a hurricane. As the craft would rise to the crest of each wave the squalls would heel her over till I thought she must turn turtle. But Hayes

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kept her steady on the course. It seemed as if that tiller were the very wrist of the storm, and each breath of wind, each heave of the sea, told him when to ease the *Lotus* off and give her a chance to shake her body free from the blue of her waves.

ON WATCH with Hayes stood the Dutchman. I've always wished since that I had refused to go below and stood a double trick with the old man. Peter lived in mortal terror of the Captain, who had punished him pretty severely for deserting. I'm not prepared to say so of my own knowledge, but it is not impossible that the woman might have been the cause for some of the hard feeling. Anyhow, Hayes had been away from her a good deal while in Apia.

In the stern of the *Lotus* was a little cockpit, a couple of steps leading from it into the cabin. Inside the pit stood the helmsman. A narrow deck space ran around it, while about this deck rose a bulwark about twelve inches in height.

I WENT below about ten o'clock, tired out. For perhaps two hours I slept. Suddenly I woke, sitting in my bunk. Some sort of sharp report had waked me. I first thought it thunder. Then *"Bang! Bang!"* I knew a revolver was being fired.

"The Captain has killed that Dutchman at last!" I exclaimed, bounding out of the cabin.

Though the might of a gale struck my face, fear oppressed me so I couldn't get air into my lungs.

I can see that scene as if it were last night. When my feet landed me in the cockpit, the night seemed as black as if the black of a hundred nights were crowded into that moment. Before me were two forms, the big frame of Hayes, the figure of Peter. Both stood on the deck above the cockpit. High in the air the sailor held a strange object that looked like a cross. But for only a second did I see them there.

BEFORE I could stir or utter a cry, the cross fell full upon the skull of the Captain. Instantly his clenched hands dropped to his sides, his head fell on his bosom, his knees sagged, and as the *Lotus* swept into the trough of the sea, his massive body lurched backward into the water.

"What have you done?" I yelled. The Dutchman stood trembling with fright.

"He try kill me!"

A second later I jumped for the tiller, shoved it hard aport and brought the vessel up into the wind.

"Captain! Captain!" I shrieked. "Hold on a minute! We're coming for you!"

But full well I knew Hayes had gone where no human voice or hand could reach him.

"Why did you kill the Captain?" I demanded.

"Oh! Don't go back!" Peter kept pleading. "Captain may kill me!"

THOUGH beside himself with terror, Peter managed to tell incoherently of the murder. When he failed to obey an order promptly, Hayes had started toward him, declaring he would kill the sailor and toss his body overboard. Peter, standing just forward of the cockpit, had prepared himself. As Hayes leaped for him, the sailor drew a revolver and fired in rapid succession. How many bullets struck Hayes or how many mortal wounds were inflicted, none can say. Some of the shots must have caused that mighty strength to rush out of Hayes' body, else the trembling sailor would never have had time to snatch up the boom-crutch and strike the blow that crushed in the skull of the buccaneer and sent his body to its grave in the Pacific.

ELSON, goes on Mr. Kidd, took the *Lotus* back to Bonham, sold the cargo and disposed of the vessel. Peter, unpunished, drifted out to join the flotsam of the South Seas. The woman made her way to Honolulu, to die in poverty and blindness.

Despite his evil life, Hayes carried something big in his soul. Nature used the extremes of emotion when she molded him. To the student of human nature Bully Hayes is a pathetic figure. Only fifty years of age when slain, he might have attained an honorable career had he but learned self-discipline early in life. He was, indeed, a strange mixture of a man, this "Last of the Buccaneers."

NOW for Louis Becke. You will remember that both Mr. Davis and Captain Dingle state that if any one in the world could clear up the Hayes mystery, Becke was the man.

Becke is dead. I think it was early in 1913 that I read in a New York newspaper the notice of his death in Australia. If we had waited a little longer with this investigation of ours, it would have been too late ever to get his final word in the clearing up of this mystery of the Pacific. As you gather from Mr. Davis' letter above, Becke was extremely close-mouthed as to the really vital points in Hayes' career. Luckily, he too, was a member of our Camp-Fire and was willing to open up for us. Indeed, he had written to the Camp-Fire and me before my letter reached him. His letter just missed the mails for the United States and he enclosed it in another letter written several days later. Extracts from both his letters follow:

A short time ago I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Eager and his son of Toledo, Ohio, who gave me a copy of your magazine *Adventure* containing your queries as to the true story of Captain "Bully" Hayes, of South Sea Islands notoriety, and what became of him eventually. The allusion you make to my being intimately acquainted with Hayes is correct. I knew him when I was quite a boy and sailed with him as supercargo and labor-recruiter for over four years.

NINE-TENTHS of the tales that have been told of and written about him are purely fiction. He has been held up to the public as a bloodthirsty pirate of the worst type and accused of crimes he never dreamt of. Even now there are

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writers who would have us believe that he is still alive and cutting off ships, making the crews walk the plank, stealing white and brown women for "his numerous harems," etc., etc., and playing the Devil generally all over the Pacific. That no one of those imaginative writers ever even saw the man, you can certainly accept my word for, for he and I were good friends, and I alone and one other person (a lady in this State of New South Wales) know the true story of his life and what became of him.

I forward you a copy of an article of mine in the *Lone Hand* magazine of March last, entitled "The Real 'Bully' Hayes." It is a curious coincidence that Mr. Eager while endeavoring to ascertain if I was living in this city should at last get into communication with me on this very subject of Captain Hayes and your magazine.

Sydney, Australia, April 12, 1912.

I never know when I shall be called upon to pack my gripsack and leave for Samoa, Fiji or New Caledonia at a very short notice, but I am getting pretty sick of it now and want to settle down here until the end of the year, as I am tired of such continuous traveling and wish to be in London early in the new year to see my daughter. From London I hope to get across to your own country and visit some friends in New London, Conn. Then on to San Francisco where I spent the days of my boyhood and had the honor of meeting General W. T. Sherman. And I look forward to the pleasure of meeting you in New York. GEO. LOUIS BECKE.

LATER, in answer to some communication of mine, came a letter written from the Palace Hotel, Watson's Bay, Sydney, dated July 29, 1912, containing the following:

I reply at once, for fear that not to do so may mean many weeks of delay, for I am in the grip of malarial fever and have had to leave Sydney and come to this marine suburb to pull up and get into harness again. The above will be my address for the next six months.

I will forward you the story of the ultimate fate of Hayes this week. . . . You are quite at liberty to use any extracts from my letters for your "Camp-Fire" department. It—"Camp-Fire"—contains most interesting matter.

I suppose this was the illness that carried him off half a year later. I do not know. Let us salute him and give him our thanks for his help to us.

THE ULTIMATE FATE OF CAPTAIN "BULLY" HAYES

By LOUIS BECKE—His Supercargo and Recruiter

Specially written for the Camp-Fire

I WAS supercargo and "recruiter" with Bully Hayes for nearly four years in his famous brig *Leonora*, formerly the *Waterlily* of Shanghai, and was with him from the time I joined him until the brig was wrecked on Strong's Island in the Caroline Group, North Pacific, in March, 1873.

Six months after the loss of the *Leonora* the British cruiser *Rosario*, Commander Dupuis, who was commissioned to arrest Hayes on a number of charges of piracy and kidnapping natives from various islands, arrived at Lêle Harbor (Strong's Island) in search of him. Hayes went boldly on board the warship, and was at once informed that he was a prisoner. He gave me a most whimsical look, and merely bowed to Commander Dupuis when the latter informed him that an inquiry would be held into the charges against him that afternoon on board the warship.

THE "inquiry" was a farce. Of seven witnesses against Hayes (stranded and dissolute white traders) who had professed themselves anxious to give evidence, only two were game to appear, and they so contradicted themselves that the commander told them to clear out. The other five were too terrified of Hayes' vengeance to put in an appearance. But certain charges brought forward by the Rev. Gilbert Snow of the Boston Board of Missions concerning Hayes' treatment of the natives of Strong's Island were proved to a certain extent.

Then here came an *impasse*. The commander had been instructed by Commodore Goodenough to arrest Hayes on certain specified charges; no charge had been officially made against him by the American missionaries to the British Government, and as Hayes was an American citizen (he was a native of Cleveland, Ohio) the British officer declined to detain him, but told the native king, his leading chiefs and Mr. Snow that if they liked to seize Hayes on their own responsibility and hand him over to an American man-o'-war, they could do so as far as he (Dupuis) was concerned.

But the king and his people were too mortally afraid of the burly alleged buccaneer to attempt such a course, and Hayes, who was wise in his generation, decided to leave the island, and return at some time in the future. This he did the same evening—after he had given me a power of attorney to act for him in his absence. He left the township he had founded at South Harbor (on the south side of the island) in a fourteen-foot oak-built boat (one of the four saved from the brig) with one companion, an American named Harry Mulholland, who was formerly a trader on Pleasant Island (Naura).

THE boat reached Guam in the Ladrone Islands safely after a voyage of 1600 or 1800 miles, touching at many islands *en route* to get fresh provisions and water; for, although she was laden down to the gunwale with both when she left Strong's Island, light and variable winds necessitated Hayes' calling at Pingelap (McAskill's Island), Ponapé (Ascension Island), and many other spots before he reached San Juan d'Apra at Guam. He was arrested by the Governor and sent to Manila to stand his trial for various alleged offenses against the Philippine Islands Government so far back as 1855-60. He emerged triumphantly, and then for some years no one knew of his whereabouts except his wife and twin daughters—Leonora and Laurina, then living at Apia in Samoa—and two other personal friends of long standing.

IN 1886, the schooner yacht *Lotus* left San Francisco for the South Sea Islands with Hayes as owner and commander. How he had gotten possession of the vessel has nothing to do with this

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story, which simply sets forth the true details of his end. He may have bought or chartered her, and may have not. The common *report*—which is still believed—is that he induced the owner to fit out the yacht for "a lucrative trading cruise to the Marshall and Caroline Islands," asserting that he (the owner) and his wife would have "a delightful experience" if they accompanied him. The owner consented and the *Lotus* sailed.

When off Alcatraz Island, in San Francisco harbor, and within a few miles of the Golden Gate, the schooner was brought to, the boat was lowered, and the owner, hopelessly "doped," was dumped into it, and one of the crew rowed him on shore and left him to recover as best he could. Avoiding Honolulu, he yet called at two of the minor ports in the Hawaiian Islands to replenish his store of provisions. Then he steered a south and west course for the Marshall and Caroline groups. All these details were given to the German authorities at Jaluit in the Marshall Islands by the man who murdered him and were corroborated by the woman who shared his fortunes.

I MUST now explain Hayes' object in running through the Marshalls and making for the Carolines, of which Strong's Island is the eastern outlier. The day before he fled from the island in the small boat he concealed some thousands of dollars at a spot in the vicinity of South Harbor, and he was undoubtedly going there to recover the buried money when he met with his death. It is quite possible that some day it may be discovered. In all—having counted it, I know—there was nearly $8,000, not the $250,000 one writer on Hayes has written so glibly about.

Of this $8,000, less than $3,000 consisted of good American and British gold and silver coins, the rest were Bolivian and Chilian half-dollars, worth but a little over half of their face value. One bag of nearly 1,000 Mexican dollars Hayes took away with him to Guam. So much for the absurd story of the $250,000 "buried in a cave on Strong's Island"—on which, by the way, there are no caves.

AFTER passing through the easterly chain of the Marshall Islands, dissensions arose between the mate, ——, and Hayes through the latter's refusing to put into Jaluit. The woman and the mate then deliberately planned his murder. Coming up out of the little cabin one day, after an angry altercation with the mate, —— struck him senseless with the yacht's iron boom-crutch. He tumbled back into the cabin, then, still breathing, he was dragged up on deck and dropped overboard. The yacht then bore up for Jaluit.

And this is the true story of the end of "Bully" Hayes. He was a much-maligned man, and scores of writers who never saw him in their lives have made a good deal of money by their monstrous tales of his alleged murders, abductions, poisonings and piracies.

AND so we have come through many rumors to what seems undoubtedly the essential truth. Bully Hayes is *not* still alive, under his own or another name, either in a monastery in Luzon or anywhere else. He did *not* go down with his ship, either through storm or the attentions of a German, English, French, Dutch, or American warship. He was *not* killed by the natives. And so on through all the conflicting reports and legends.

Louis Becke's statement and Mr. Kidd's report of Elson's give us the answer we have been seeking. Becke gives the date of Hayes' death as 1887, Elson as 1877. Becke must here have made a slip of the pen. He was a sick man when he wrote. He is dead, and we can not ask him questions. He makes a corresponding error in the date of the *Lotus's* sailing from San Francisco. Mr. Kidd says Elson's memory was distinct on the latter date, recalling that the Centennial Exposition was being held when they sailed. Mr. Kidd also personally examined some twenty years of back files of Honolulu newspapers and found unquestionable evidence that Hayes was killed in the '70's, not the '80's. Also Arthur Johnston, in an article in an authoritative book on Hawaiian matters, quotes the testimony of a Dr. Ingolls who joined the *Lotus* at Apia and left her before she sailed from Jaluit, giving the date of the latter sailing as March 31, 1877.

THERE is no doubt on the main facts—that Bully Hayes was killed by the blow of a boom-crutch on the *Lotus* early in 1877 by one of his own men, and that a woman played her part in his undoing.

Elson says the killer was a Dutch sailor named Peter, last name forgotten. Becke says it was a mate with a Scandinavian name (*not* Elson). Peter may have been Scandinavian, not Dutch. "Dutch" has a broad and inexact application among sailors, and first names are still more loosely used.

Becke, for all his unquestioned resources for keeping in touch with Hayes' career, had to get his information concerning this last scene from others. Becke could be trusted to get the main points straight, even though not present personally; on the details it would seem safer to take Elson's version, though we must not forget that Becke had knowledge of a statement made by the killer and the woman to the German authorities at Jaluit.

AND so, among us of the Camp-Fire, we have cleared up the first big mystery of those we have undertaken. Now for the

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others—General Sir Hector Macdonald, U. Dhammaloka, and the rest. (Some one else has "beaten us to it" on the *Marie Celeste* affair, and later we'll have a brief account of it.) There are many of them in our field of adventure, and no agency in the world is better equipped to trace them than are the world-wanderers who sit about our Camp-Fire.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

WANTED MEN

NOTE.—We offer this corner of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to our readers. Naturally we can not vouch for any of the letters, the writers thereof, or any of the claims set forth therein, beyond the fact that we receive and publish these letters in good faith. We reserve the privilege of not publishing any letters or parts of a letter. Any inquiry for men sent to this magazine will be considered as intended for publication, at our discretion, in this department, with all names and addresses given therein printed in full, unless such inquiry contains contrary instructions. In the latter case we reserve the right to substitute for real names any numbers or other names. We are ready to forward mail through this office, but assume no responsibility therefor. **N.B.—Items asking for money rather than men will not be published.**

FOR gold-mining expedition to Panama Republic 20 to 25 good, strong, healthy young men. Work on percentage. Must be able to take care of self. Time, ten to twelve months. Write, giving full description, with photo if possible.—Address LIEUT. H. E. ROSE, 176 3d St., San Francisco, Cal.

Inquiries for opportunities instead of men are NOT printed in this department.

PARTNER by man who can secure control of an undeveloped mine in Mexico, abandoned on account of revolution. Have special passport to travel in territory indicated. An offer of $5,000 was refused for this prospect. Small capital required for necessary expenses only. Satisfactory references and particulars given.—Address SONORA, 234 E. Hill Ave., Knoxville, Tenn.

Inquiries for opportunities instead of men are NOT printed in this department.

TWO men, 25, want partner about same age and disposition to start on prospecting, adventure and hunting trip anywhere, preferably South America. Both used to survey, camp, and prospecting life; can walk, ride and sail. Gasoline engineers. Have reputations of being happy under all circumstances. Out for adventure and profit. Are not "rough-necks," but can rough it.—Address J. B., Box 128, Cedars, Quebec, Can.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE.—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

RONALD E. ELMSIE, last heard from in Canada. Worked on survey with him in Minnesota in 1907.—Address IRWIN E. HARRIS, 901 Tenth Ave., W., Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

PAUL M. T. KANTHAR, last heard of in Army stationed somewhere around Boston; before that worked for Cornell Iron Company.—Address L. T. 239.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

ELIZABETH MATILDA WILLIAMS, taken from Brashear, La., as a child during the Civil War. Her cousin inquires.—Address ALVIN S. SMITH, Box 204, Tarpon Springs, Fla.

PAUL SORENTZEN, alias Sam Wilson, formerly in Dubuque, Iowa, later in New York State. "Dutch" write.—Address L. T. 239.

COMRADES Co. G, 41st Inf., Philippines 1899-1901. Also members Captain Graves' Company, 20th Inf. in fight at Caloocan, Batangus, P. I. (Lake Taal). Late Sergeant Co. G, 41st Inf., also civilian scout commanding detachment 1st Co. Native Scouts, 1902.—Address HARRY A. TAYLOR, Sergt. Police Dept., 240 Center St., New York City.

WILLIAM M. ORPEN, 34. Left Brooklyn, N. Y., eight years ago for Los Angeles. Thence went to San Pedro, Calif.; suddenly left about three years ago.—Address his uncle, T. T. DONOVAN, 484 Greene Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

WILLIAM MILLER. Last heard of in Stanford, Can., Nov. 1911. Electrician. Word wanted by mother.—Address MRS. MARY MILLER, 4922 Charles St., Madisonville, Ohio.

CAPT. R. H. M. ANSELL, my husband. Boer War with Kitchener; Zulu War, 1906; eighteenth man into Nome in rush of 1897; cow-puncher in Calgary country. Last seen, Winnipeg, Canada, April 1, 1912.—Address EMILY F. V. ANSELL, care of British Consul, 268 Market Street, San Francisco.

GEBBS or Gibbs, rebel junta courier, who married señorita in Santa Rosalia when I was there with Col. Juan Porras, chasing bridge-dynamiters (Orozco revolt). Saw you in El Paso, when you left for Cananea Mines. Important.—Address JACK ZIMMERMAN, Pulaski, Pa.

GENE GILLESPIE, better known along the border as "Manhattan." I saw him last just prior to the battle of Ojinaga.—Address JACK CHANDON, or BILL EVERETT, care of General Delivery, El Paso, Tex.

BURTON L. BURHANS. Last heard from at Elkhart, Ind. Brother dying.—Address A. EUGENE BURHANS, 80 Kingston St., Rochester, N. Y.

J. L. HUFFMAN, commonly called Johnnie. Printer. Left home seven years ago. Last heard from in California. Had intended to go to some mines in Mexico.—Address his mother, MRS. C. H. WHITNEY, 2236 8th St., Baker, Ore.

CHARLES KNIGHT, formerly of Winterset, Iowa. Last heard of at Spokane, Wash. Height 5 ft. 10 in.; fair complexion, blue eyes. Urgent.—Address R. E. DANFORTH, Winterset, Iowa.

EDDIE ADAMS, Westerner. Knife-cut above left knee; short; sign-writer.—Address H. ("EDDIE") VEITH, El Centro, Cal.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

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LYDIA LOOPMAN, formerly of Waynesburg, Pa., write.—Address L T 238.

JOHN THOMSON, Corporal, 2d Canadian Mounted Rifles. Boer War veteran; later worked on Cape-to-Cairo Railway.—Address WILLIAM A. STEWART ("Scotty"), 480 Notre Dame Ave., Winnipeg, Canada.

DAN McCARTHY, rigger on Victoria Falls Bridge, Nyanza.—Address L T 236.

FRANK F. FULLMER, of Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada, and Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.—Address S. R. BEVIER, Jackson, Mich.

R. C. BYERS, last heard of in Moose Jaw.—Address S. R. BEVIER, Jackson, Mich.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

MICHAEL NOLAN, born in Kilkenny, Ireland.—Address J. M. NOLAN, 22 S. 6th St., New Bedford, Mass.

BROTHER, Karol Fedoroski, 17; came to America Jan. 1911 from Teofipol, Wolynski, Guberni.—Address SEVERYNA FEDEROSKA, care of Mrs. Wright Kramer, Graham Ave., Hempstead, L. I., N. Y.

MISS WINNIEFRED NELDA, Francis Wilson and their father; also "Guy" Davis, 18. Party last heard of in Victoria, Tamaulipas, Mexico, about November, 1901.—Address FRANK H. STORMS, 2809 Travis Ave., Fort Worth, Texas.

BROTHER, James B. Young. Mother dead.—Address WALTER YOUNG, 330 W. 46th St., New York.

JACK J. DALTON. Advise of important news of Tehualtepec Mine, Paraguay.—Address J. C. EASTMAN, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Can.

J. L. F. Grandparents sick. Come home; no questions asked. Your support is needed for two babies.—Address BLANCHE, L T 234.

BOYS in Army, Navy or Marine Corps in China Relief Expedition, 1900 and 1901, write.—Address GEO. C. WRENN, 3202 35th Ave., Oakland, Cal.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

"BOB" HAYES, Hollis Bach, write.—Address L T 232.

JAMES ALEXANDER GOODWIN, my son. Miner; former U. S. Regular Inf.—Address MRS. SARAH GOODWIN, 519 11th St., Sacramento, Calf.

CHARLES H. BLANKMAN once with D., L. & W. machine-shops at Buffalo, N. Y. Age 40; light complexion, brown hair, blue eyes; height about 5 ft. 10 in.—Address MRS. L. BLANKMAN, 116 Harrison Ave., Endicott, N. Y.

BRUCE LAKE, my brother. Worked for Pacific Coast Construction Co., Cleone, Ore.—Address PEARL LAKE, St. Paul, Kan.

PARTNERS, Roy and Harry Hinckley.—Address W. BARRY KANE, Post-Office, Chocolate Bayou, Tex.

FATHER, Alston O. Cuyler, of Canada. Age 55; 5 ft. 6 in.; red hair and mustache. Also mother, Mrs. Lauretta Rickard (remarried).—Address MRS. CHARLOTTE A. RODGERS, Hotel Lenox, Tacoma, Wash.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

J. HOWARD COOPER, who left Savannah, Dec., 1912, for southern Florida points.—Address ALLAN MINA, Buffalo, N. Y.

MERLE, Eugene, and T. G. Leigh, formerly of Washington State.—Address L T 235.

JAMES FEENEY, my son. Age 20. First joint of right thumb missing; scars on ankle.—Address MRS. FEENEY, 400 W. 47th St., New York.

CHARLES FENTON, my uncle. Engineer.—Address ALICE PERSSE, care of EDMUND S. CLOAK, 85 Willow Ave., Moose Jaw, Sask., Can.

JNO. F. COATES, of Colorado, Ohio. Served in Spanish-American War; inventor of smoke consumer.—Address C. B. L., care of ADVENTURE.

CUMLEY. Any one of this name write. — Address J. W. CUMLEY, 920 Parallel St., Atchison, Kan.

WILLIAM C. SHAW.—Address A. S. HOFFMAN, care of *Adventure.*

NUMBERS 56, 73, 76, W 93, W 107, W 140, W 150, W 153, W 183, W 184, W 189, W 212, W 215, C 189, C 198, C 205, L T 207. Please send us your present addresses. Letters forwarded to you at addresses given us don't reach you.—Address A. S. HOFFMAN, care of *Adventure.*

THE following have been inquired for in full in the July and August issues of *Adventure.* They can get name of inquirer from this magazine.

Inquiries will be printed three times. In the January and July issues all unfound back names will be printed again:

ATHERTON, Jack; Bens, Joseph, called "Jupp"; Boatswain's Mate Holyoke, Seymour Relief Expedition; Cotler, William T.; Ellis, Harry; Hardy, John; Hart, Jack, once of 5th U. S. Cav.; Lawler, Slim; Lighthowler, George W., formerly lance corporal, 6th Inniskillings Dragoons; Litchfield, H.; McLay, Charles; Murray, Michael, late of Tralee, Ireland; Nugent, Richard Thomas; Pepper, Howard, prospector; Phillpot, Shirley N., ex-sergeant, U. S. A.; Rice, Andrew, '49er; Smith, Francis Basil, No. 17 Troop, South African Constabulary; Timmanus, Frank E.

MISCELLANEOUS. Members of Harvard, '99; Sands, Gen. Cliff, and members of his proposed expedition.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

MANUSCRIPTS sent us by the following are being held by us, having been returned as unclaimed at the addresses furnished:

W. Lynch, Trenton, N. J.; W. Mack, Pacheca, Mexico; Henry W. Edwards, New York; W. G. Gormley, Ontario, Canada; George Stillions, Chicago, Ill.; Francis Manston, Chicago, Cal.; Charles E. Mack, New York.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

AS ALREADY announced, every item hereafter will be published three times, then taken out. But in the January and July numbers of each year we will publish the names of all who have been inquired for and remain unfound.

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THE TRAIL AHEAD

STRANGE ideas many people have about magazine editors. Editors are neither long-haired highbrows with a superhuman supply of brains nor are they hard-hearted fiends whose chief joy is rejecting—without reading—manuscripts from "unknown" authors.

An editor is probably a better editor than you are, but you're probably a better lawyer, doctor, carpenter, salesman or whatever it is than he is. In his calling, as in yours, efficiency is largely the result of training and special experience. For the rest, he and you have whatever brains and disposition the Lord happened to give you.

But this persistent idea worries me—that new writers without reputation or "pull" can't get their stories read, let alone accepted.

Once I knew a man who, laboring under this delusion, sent the same poem to five magazines at once. (Which, by the way, is unfair and "agin' the rules.") Four of the five, including one I was on, accepted it. Embarrassing explanations had to follow.

Just think it over a minute. All "established" authors were once unknown. How did they get started if editors refused to consider their work?

I believe *Adventure* is more open to new writers than most other magazines, but perhaps I am prejudiced. At least I know that practically every manuscript that reaches our office passes first through my own personal hands, not those of an assistant, and if anything fills our office with glee it is "discovering" a new and unknown writer who can "deliver the goods" or can be coached and helped until he can do so.

Of the 12 writers in this September issue 8, when they first sent a manuscript to us, were either new writers or so unknown that none of us in the office had ever heard of them. These 8 are: Talbot Mundy, W. Townend, Thomas Addison, George Shepherd, Herbert C. Test, John Amid, Frederick William Wallace, and Hapsburg Liebe. In the October number, as it is at present laid out, 9 of the 14 writers were also "unknown" to us—Allan Dunn, E. Kirby Keener, C. Hilton-Turvey, Octavus Roy Cohen, Donald Francis McGrew, Rudolph R. Krebs, and three of the authors named under September. It was two or three years ago that some of them came to us. They are no longer unknown. Some of them have successful books to their credit. All are appearing in other magazines—Talbot Mundy in *Everybody's*, *McClure's*, etc.; Allan Dunn in *Saturday Evening Post* and elsewhere; W. Townend in *Metropolitan*, *Everybody's*, etc.; and so on down the list.

Pull? In not one case. Of the 14 writers mentioned above there are 9 whom I have even now never met. So far as I can remember, no one of the 14 was "introduced" by anybody or anything except the merit of his work.

Another thing besides finding a new writer produces glee in this office—finding a new character in fiction who, at the first meeting, makes us like him and like to read about him. For example, *Dick Anthony of Arran*, *Come-On Charley*, *Ivanoff*, and *Miss Dem*. In the cases of *Come-On* and *Miss Dem* new character and new writer appeared at one and the same time, and our glee was therefore doubled.

But naturally it's best of all to see *Dick Anthony*, *Come-On Charley* and the others leap into favor with you readers as they did with us. *Arsène Lupin* was already a popular character, a favorite of readers and theater-goers on two continents. But until we had your enthusiastic welcome for *Dick*, *Come-On*, *Ivanoff*, *Sled Wheeler*, *Miss Dem*, and the others we had to keep a tight rein on our own enthusiasm. Now that they've made good we can grin out loud, for all of them were born in *Adventure* and belong exclusively to you and us.

I even have an idea that every one of them is a member of the Camp-Fire. Later the *Wanderlust* will seize them and they'll venture farther afield, for personally I'm quite sure most or all of them will some day appear in book form, and one or two of them on the stage. But their native-land magazine is *Adventure*, and I'm thinking they'll always come back home to take us, their oldest friends, out upon whatever new adventures they may undertake.

Let's see, in the center of the page, what they and other adventurers are going to do in the next issue (October, out September 3d). A. S. H.

THE GREENSTONE MASK *By Allan Dunn*
A splendid complete novelette of adventure in New Zealand and the South Seas.

DICK ANTHONY OF ARRAN *By Talbot Mundy*
His third adventure—the best ye .

THE CHECHAKOS *By E. Kirby Keener*
A strong tale of the men of the North.

THE GETAWAY *By Rudolph R. Krebs*
It will make you sit tight in your chair.

SAFE OR OUT? *By Hugh S. Fullerton*
A baseball adventure in a big league.

COME-ON CHARLEY DEALS IN ART *By Thomas Addison*
Come-On bucks a new game hard.

ARSÈNE LUPIN—AND THE TIGER'S TEETH *By Maurice Leblanc*
No better action detective-story ever written.

NOT IN THE MOVIES *By C. Hilton-Turvey*
Miss Dem motors into considerable excitement.

THE ONE-AND-ONE AND— *By Octavus Roy Cohen*
A big story of the prize-ring.

THE GUNS OF THE SEVENTY-THIRD *By Donald Francis McGrew*
American Regulars and Volunteers in the Philippines, a fight, and a thought.

TRADITIONS OF THE SERVICE *By Carl Mattison Chapin*
A fireman story—the real thing.

AND OTHERS! AND OTHERS! AND OTHERS!

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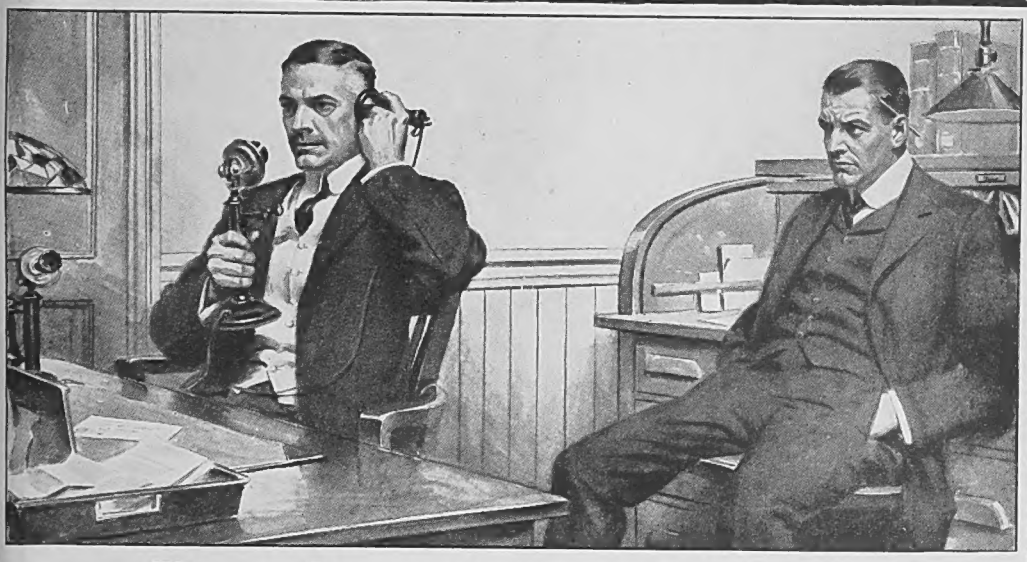

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Telephone Expert	Show Card Writing
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Building Contractor	Advertising
Architectural Draftsman	Commercial Illustrating
Structural Engineer	Industrial Designing
Concrete Construction	Commercial Law
Mechan. Engineer	Automobile Running
Mechanical Draftsman	Teacher
Refrigeration Engineer	English Branches
Civil Engineer	Good English for Every One
Surveyor	Agriculture
Mine Superintendent	Poultry Farming
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Everybody's Magazine

for

AUGUST

HENRY KITCHELL WEBSTER

The NEW TECHNIQUE

by

HENRY KITCHELL WEBSTER

THE "String-Pulling" Bunty is no new figure in literature, of course; but if you want to meet a really-truly modern American Bunty who's taken a course in Logic, Economics and other maidenly pursuits, don't fail to read "The New Technique."

This entrancing heroine "runs" her Mother. Manages her Father. Plans for her Fiancé. It is only when she relies on her education for *herself* that her Sex asserts itself and insists on her being happy in the manner prescribed by one Dr. Dan Cupid. It surely is a *modern* story.

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